

An Examination of How Donald Trump's Charismatic Leadership and Charismatic Rhetoric Uses Twitter to Bond with his Followers

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Thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa
in partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in Criminology

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Maritza Felices-Luna, who provided invaluable guidance, feedback, and patience throughout this entire process. This thesis never would have been possible without the structure and encouragement you provided as it pushed me to be a better writer and to complete this project when I wasn't sure that it would have been possible. I would also like to thank my examiners Dr. Dominique Robert and Dr. Eduardo González Castillo for their feedback and encouraging me to further think outside the box to achieve new perspectives.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for supporting me and keeping me grounded through everything since I started this thesis. Finally, I would like to send a special thank you to my parents, who were there for me and supported me every step of the way, even when times were tough. Your encouragement and understanding during this process means everything to me.

Abstract

Trump's tumultuous presidency has been described as far-right through the use of discriminatory and nationalist talking points to prey upon the fears of conservative citizens in the US. He has also been described as charismatic, but research has not focused upon how he used Twitter to convey his charismatic leadership and rhetoric to the public. This thesis seeks to examine how Donald Trump's use of charismatic leadership and charismatic rhetoric influence his use of Twitter and how he interacts with his followers. I analyze Trump's tweets between May 25th, 2020, until January 8th, 2021, as two significant events (the Black Lives Matter protests and the 2020 US presidential election) occurred during this time that help shape his presidency. I found that through examining Trump's tweets, it is shown that he promotes a far-right brand of loyalty that supports the suppression of anybody that opposes him.

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Introduction

In 2016, Trump seized control of the Republican Party and was elected as the 45th President of the United States. He utilized his position of power to form the US government in his image and ‘othered’ anybody that opposed him, whether they were government officials, politicians, or citizens. His presidency relied on the use of hate and discrimination, conspiracy theories, corruption, violent suppression of protests, and justification of violence from authority and his supporters in attempts to obtain the most power that he could achieve. His presidency will go down in history and in infamy as he is the only president to be impeached twice and for inciting the deadly January 6th, 2021, insurrection on the US Capitol building, as his supporters used violence as they attempted to stop the certification of the 2020 presidential election results. After he left the White House, he continued to support the same conspiracies that inspired the insurrection and managed to maintain a large percentage of his original voter base. Despite the numerous legal challenges that he is facing, his demeanor has not changed as he vows revenge on those that he sees as villainous, unpatriotic traitors that are simply out to silence him. Fast forward to 2024, and the next US presidential election is set to take place in November, Trump is once again the frontrunner for the Republican Party nomination, and there is a possibility that he may be re-elected as President.

The study of Trump’s presidency and continuing influence on US politics continue to be relevant and has been of considerable interest to me. His election and rhetorical style has had an influence on global politics that is still felt today, thus the study of Trumpism can be useful for understanding the current political landscape across the world. His election to the presidency of the most powerful country in history has led to an increase in hate crimes and has emboldened members of the far-right to exit the shadows and promote their values in public. Trump reintroduced a form of charismatic leadership and rhetoric that can be compared to that of former far-right authoritarians and populists as he advocates for the suppression of human rights to certain citizens and promotes a white nationalist nation. For these reasons, the study of Trump’s rise to power and his rhetoric/conduct when he was in office continues to be an important area of research as the world continues to face an increase in democratic backsliding.

The first chapter of this thesis will examine Trump’s entrance into US politics in 2015, how he appealed to so many people, how he was able to obtain the Republican Party nomination

and eventually win the presidency. This section will discuss Trump's political rhetoric and how he utilized populism as a tool to broadcast his vision for the US. It will examine how Trump's promises and policy initiatives were hateful and discriminatory in nature as he appealed directly to the far-right and conservatives who felt as if they were left behind by previous administrations.

The second chapter will discuss the theoretical framework of this thesis. I will describe the concepts of charismatic leadership and charismatic rhetoric that will later be used to analyze my research. I will also provide historical context and important characteristics of both concepts as they are useful to understanding how each have been used by previous charismatic leaders. The third section will describe my methodology, where I discuss why I focused on Trump's tweets to obtain my data and the importance of the specific timeframe that was set at the beginning of my research to determine which tweets I was ultimately going to analyze.

Finally, the fourth chapter will cover how Trump is a charismatic leader and how he utilized his rhetoric to shape the US in his image. I will discuss how he attracted his followers and was able to obtain such a large following before delving into how he presented himself and the rest of the US. This chapter will also discuss how he used hateful and discriminatory rhetoric to 'other' anybody that opposed him and how he attempted to suppress all people, institutions, and politicians that challenged him. This led to Trump promoting a neo-fascist rhetoric by using populism as he destabilized the state of democracy in the US.

Chapter I: Literature Review

The scientific literature on Trump's presidency has consistently described him as an antagonistic political outsider. He rose to power by appealing to and mobilizing the political and religious right by utilizing the media, especially through the social media platform, Twitter. Trump's political rhetoric has been described as discriminatory, where he utilized language that is characterized as anti-establishment/elitist, racist, xenophobic/nativist, misogynistic, and homophobic/transphobic to appeal to conservative voters and people who felt that they were being left behind by political elites and 'political correctness'. My literature review begins with a description of the political climate that Trump generated through his public discourse and his methods of governing the country. Next, I will examine Trump's rhetoric through the characteristics that are attributed to him in the literature. Finally, I will conclude by introducing the research question that this thesis will seek to address.

Stoking a Divisive, Hostile and Hateful Political Climate

In this section, I demonstrate how Trump obtained power and how he governed, as I explore how Trump exacerbated discriminatory practices by the government and furthered strict partisanship among party lines. The first part of this section focuses upon the political climate that was created by Trump's presidency, and how he appealed to a predominantly white voter base while utilizing insulting language to degrade anybody/thing (such as the political opposition and certain media networks) that opposed him. The second part of this section continues by exploring how Trump schemed to shape the US as a nationalist country and in his own personal image. I explore how Trump governed by demanding loyalty from government appointees and employees, how he would shape government departments to achieve his personal goals, and how he utilized Twitter as an important tool to communicate with his supporters and the public. Finally, the last part of this section examines how Trump's rhetoric appealed to right-wing and far-right voters by playing to their fears. Trump would utilize the fears of right-wing, white working-class individuals to appeal to a past of 'traditional' values by creating a sense of anxiety of what would happen to the US should the Democrats reclaim the presidency.

An Antagonizing Path to the Presidency

On June 16th, 2015, Trump rode down the escalator in New York's Trump Tower to announce his candidacy (Sides et al., 2017) for the President of the United States. During his speech at that very same campaign announcement, Trump (2015; para. 9) made clear what would become a central campaign issue as he stated "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best ... They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists". (as cited in Keck & Clua-Losada, 2021, p. 611), before continuing "And some, I assume, are good people. But I speak to border guards and they tell us what we're getting"¹ (as cited in Subtirelu, 2017, p. 325). Trump then proceeded to claim that "I will build a great, great wall on our southern border. And I will have Mexico pay for that wall" (as cited in Keck & Clua-Losada, 2021, p. 611). On December 2nd, 2015, Trump announced that he would call "for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on", after a mass shooting in San Bernadino, California, where the perpetrators' had expressed allegiance to Islamic terrorist organizations (Subtirelu, 2017). Also, on October 7th, 2016, the Washington Post released a video from 2005, in which Trump is recorded bragging "in vulgar terms about kissing, groping, and trying to have sex with women"² (as cited in Hayden et al., 2019, p. 5). Trump's comments have been explained as explicitly racist and sexist (Shelton & Stasio, 2017; as cited in Womick et al., 2019, p. 644), but to some, this was accepted as a sign of Trump's authenticity, which voters thought of as a breath of "fresh air" and highlighted Trump's opposition to "political correctness" (Stanley, 2015; as cited in Womick et al., 2019, p. 644). It is likely that millions of US citizens supported Trump's opposition to 'political correctness' because they felt that it was suffocating and impacting their right to free speech (Theye & Melling, 2018), as Shafer (2017) notes that Trump offered the rationale that political correctness was taking too long, which was responsible for the US not achieving greatness (Theye & Melling, 2018, p. 324).

¹ Full text of the speech available here: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/06/16/full-text-donald-trump-announces-a-presidential-bid/>; as cited in Subtirelu, 2017, p. 324.

² Fahrenthold, David A. (2016). Trump Recorded Having Extremely Lewd Conversation About Women in 2005. The Washington Post; as cited in Hayden et al., 2019, p. 5.

Fraser (1998) argues that people's voting behaviours are based on identity politics, which means that social class play less of a factor on people's votes and is more concerned with place and group identity (as cited in Albrecht, 2019, p. 3). Relevant factors include cultural, economic, and demographic change (Albrecht, 2019). Trump's appeal to the US social structure included the white working class, which encompassed a major section of his voter base (Navarro, 2017), and were demonstrated to be Trump's more loyal supporters leading up to and after the 2016 election in the American rust belt, especially in the states of Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania (Berezin, 2017; as cited in Whitehead et al, 2018, p. 149). Several scholars have argued that much of this voter group (many of whom had supported Obama in the 2008 and 2012 elections) was a result of their increasing economic and social insecurity in the US³ (as cited in Whitehead et al, 2018, p. 149). Trump's discourse resonated with those who were deemed to be "American sufferers", as he used fear to play upon their social, cultural, and economic anxieties, and turn them into anger and political action (Austermuehl, 2020). According to Schnurer (2016), the 2016 presidential election was considered to be about the "widespread anger at ruling elites" (as cited in Rudolph, 2021, p. 36). Trump recognized the disdain that much of the general public held towards the federal government, resulting in his promise to "drain the swamp" in reference to the political establishment in Washington (Rudolph, 2021).

At the beginning of his campaign, Trump's presidential bid failed to attract distinguishable support from within the Republican establishment, but Trump began to rapidly ascent in the early polls and obtain free publicity (Pierson, 2017). Prominent Republicans like former presidents George W. Bush and George H.W. Bush, along with senators Susan Collins, John McCain and Mitt Romney openly refused to endorse Trump, citing his insulting or mocking rhetoric and politics. The insult politics were inseparable from Trump since the beginning of his campaign, but Trump had become the unexpected leader in the polls going into the first Republican primary debate in 2016 (Winberg, 2017). At the outset of the 2016 Republican primaries, there were 17 candidates but none of them sounded anything like Trump. None of the other candidates made any promises resembling Trump's, such as stifling dissent, to crush evil, build a wall, or ban Muslim immigrants. The voters showed a preference for a domineering and intolerant leader who would put their prejudices into practice (Smith & Hanley, 2018). The 2016 election acted as a referendum for US citizens to define who they are as a country and how they

³ Berezin 2017; Edgell 2017; Schaffner et al. 2017; Wayne et al. 2016; as cited in Whitehead et al, 2018, p. 149.

felt about people that were characterized as being different from them. The competing viewpoints highlighted the support for a multicultural society that welcomes new people and embraces diversity versus the support of an earlier era that idealized traditional gender roles and white Christian dominance in economic and cultural aspects of society (Sides et al., 2017). These feelings of nostalgia for an earlier time also embedded racism in Trump's branded slogan "Make America Great Again." By speaking to the fears of white Americans, Trump signaled a return to a no-nonsense society of law, order and punishment that empowered white men to intimidate minority groups and women (Goldstein & Hall, 2017). Trump had also portrayed Washington, DC as being full of corrupt insiders who rigged the system against citizens. In response to this portrayal of the political establishment, Trump coined the trope 'Drain the swamp', in reference to the political class (Şahin et al., 2021), as Trump framed his campaign and image as being a Washington outsider that represented "the forgotten man and woman" (Trump, 2016; as cited in Gallagher, 2019, p. 185). When Trump accepted the Republican nomination for president, he addressed an audience of supporters who were considered to be angry but noble sufferers – the forgotten, the downtrodden, the discarded, and the subjugated. Trump stated while addressing the crowd:

Every day I wake up determined to deliver for the people I have met all across this nation that have been neglected, ignored, and abandoned. I have visited the laid-off factory workers, and the communities crushed by our horrible and unfair trade deals. These are the forgotten men and women of our country. People who work hard but no longer have a voice. I AM YOUR VOICE!⁴ (as cited in Kelly, 2020, p. 5).

Trump's campaign was dependent upon the media to deliver its message, but the campaign's relationship with the media was a complicated one. Trump was openly hostile to news reporters and the press, but Trump's campaign benefitted from the attention that his insult politics received from the media⁵ (Winberg, 2017). The media utilized Trump's insults in their headlines as he used new insults to attack his political opponents, such as calling Hillary Clinton, "Crooked Hillary". Trump would pick names for his opponents that tend to be short but likely to stick with

⁴ Donald Trump 2016 RNC speech reprinted in, "Full Text: Donald Trump 2016 RNC Draft Speech Transcript," POLITICO, July 21, 2016, <http://politi.co/2ApcBDB>; as cited in Kelly, 2020, p. 5.

⁵ "The press and the media are bodies employing multitudes of people, of course. Any reference to the press and the media is bound to be generalizing. Several reporters exhibited integrity and produced excellent work with the highest journalistic standards"; as cited in Winberg, 2017, p. 13.

voters⁶ (Winberg, 2017). Aside from the traditional use of the news media, Hayes (2021) notes that Trump also prominently used social media, especially through his unrestrained use of Twitter, which earned him the title “Tweeter in Chief”. Ott & Dickinson (2020) note that Trump’s use of Twitter was considered a game changer for his campaign, which enabled Trump to “generate free media” (p. 12; as cited in Hayes, 2021, p. 20), which included the coverage of the tweets and of the tweets themselves (Hayes, 2021). When news programs broadcasted Trump’s tweets, it allowed Trump to communicate unedited messages to the entirety of the US, which included supporters that did not use Twitter. By broadcasting his tweets in an unedited fashion, it incentivized Trump to tweet often (Gallagher, 2019). Twitter was also a tool that was used by Trump and his campaign to gauge support for policy proposals. Sam Nunberg (who was an advisor for Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign), had stated that Twitter was used by the campaign as a focus group. Much of the campaign’s messaging was determined by the number of retweets a tweet received from followers. An issue was deemed to be a “winning” issue and became a part of the campaign’s messaging if it was retweeted more than 100 times (Bogado 2017; as cited in Miles & Haider-Markel, 2020, p. 438).

Leading up to the 2016 election, the media played a crucial role as most polls had Hillary Clinton winning the presidency by a rather comfortable margin, but Trump was elected to the presidency by winning a combined 30 states and 304 Electoral College votes compared to the 20 states, the District of Columbia, and 227 Electoral College votes for Clinton (Byers & Carson, 2017). Hillary Clinton was the Democratic Party’s nominee for president during this election, but Savoy (2018) argues that she always appeared to be a cold woman, to be somewhat robotic, and was a member of the political establishment that was rejected by many people. The media also focused on charismatic leadership between the two candidates, as a substantial amount of media coverage focused on the “legendary” charisma of Trump⁷ (as cited in Aswad, 2019, p. 57), while the media also made comments that Clinton did not possess the necessary charisma to unite the US (Keneally 2016; as cited in Aswad, 2019, p. 57).

⁶ Maggie Haberman, “Donald Trump, in Upstate New York, Tries another Label for Hillary Clinton,” New York Times, April 16, 2016, accessed January 4, 2017, www.nytimes.com/politics/first-draft/2016/04/16/donald-trump-in-upstate-new-york-tries-another-label-for-hillaryclinton; as cited in Winberg, 2017, p. 14.

⁷ e.g., Berger 2017; Guilford 2016; Khazan 2016; Minton 2016; Sullivan 2017; as cited in Aswad, 2019, p. 57.

Implementing Campaign Promises through Political Scheming and Twitter Haranguing

Larcinese et al. (2006) argues that there are key differences that exist between being a political candidate that makes campaign promises and being the president that governs the country, as a chief executive is meant to utilize expert judgment and analysis to determine the best policies as to achieve policy goals and influence the actions of the government with a general political strategy (as cited in Trump et al., 2017, p. 43). After winning the 2016 election, the Republicans were in control of the White House, Senate, and House of Representative, effectively establishing the assumption that the Republicans would have an easier time passing key pieces of legislation (Byers & Carson, 2017).

Trump's presidency of the US was xenophobic in nature as his hostility towards immigrants spanned across multiple areas of governance with his 'America First' approach. Trump's efforts included implementing travel bans, promising to build walls, halting the effort of asylum seekers, and drastically restricting immigration to the US. His approach to fighting immigration was extended as well to assisted housing and low-cost public housing, as his administration initiated regulatory reforms to deny some immigrants and their families access to public housing assistance (Allen & Goetz, 2021). Trump also utilized an 'America First' approach towards US energy independence, as Stiglitz (2018) states that Trump's administration viewed international trade as being a zero-sum game worldview, which promotes the idea that one party's gain is another party's loss (as cited in Guliyev, 2020, p. 4). Trump further expanded his 'America First' governance by incorporating international economic policy, as under the Trump administration, the US shifted from liberal internationalism to economic nationalism and protectionism (Guliyev, 2020). Ikenberry (2018, 7) notes that Trump's presidency was a sign of a broader crisis facing liberal internationalism as:

...the United States has elected a president who is actively hostile to liberal internationalism. Trade, alliances, international law, multilateralism, environment, torture and human rights—on all these issues, President Trump has made statements that, if acted upon, would effectively bring to an end America's role as leader of the liberal world order (as cited in Guliyev, 2020).

Trump's job as president was considered errant, with institutional actors involving themselves in the process to thwart Trump's worst initiatives (Şahin et al., 2021). This included the refusal to

table papers in front of Trump to protect US trade agreements,⁸ the courts striking down Trump's ban to several predominantly Muslim countries,⁹ and Republican Senators John McCain, Lisa Murkowski, and Susan Collins voting against Trump's attempts at repealing the Affordable Care Act, more commonly known as Obamacare¹⁰ (as cited in Şahin et al., 2021). However, Trump was able to circumvent these challenges to varying degrees, such as eliminating the 'individual mandate' of the Affordable Care Act (which supported the entire system), and editing the travel ban by including a couple of non-predominantly Muslim countries to withstand the scrutiny of the Supreme Court (Şahin et al., 2021). Another example of the circumvention of the system was Trump's pre- and post-election pledge to build a wall along the US-Mexico border. Siepel (2019) observes that beginning in late 2018, the Trump administration and Congress battled over funding for the border wall, resulting in a 34-day government shutdown, which is the longest shutdown in US history (as cited in Keck & Clua-Losada, 2021, p. 612). To override Congress and obtain the desired funding due to Congress denying his request, Trump's administration declared a national emergency in February 2019, which allowed the diversion of funds from the Defense and Treasury Departments for the wall (Baker, 2010; as cited in Keck & Clua-Losada, 2021, p. 612).

As Trump challenged and outmaneuvered his way through restraints that were in place on his power, Trump set his sights on reshaping the executive branch by modeling departments to resemble his personal orbit more closely. Federal employees (such as scientists in the Environmental Protection Agency, employees of the Agriculture Department's Economic Research Service, and researchers at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture) left in droves, which was a plan of strategic provocation by the Trump administration (Şahin et al., 2021). Instead of terminating government experts directly, Trump's discourse developed a hostile climate that was detrimental to each respective agency's traditional goals (Şahin et al., 2021), although, the Trump administration also drafted policy that allowed government employees to be fired, as Moynihan (2022) notes that Trump signed Executive Order 13957: Creating Schedule F in the Excepted Service on October 21st, 2020. This order allowed government agencies to

⁸ <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/404933-woodward-gary-cohn-pulled-letters-off-trumps-desk-withdrawing-us-from>; as cited in Şahin et al., 2021, p. 594.

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/us/travel-ban-blocked.html>; as cited in Şahin et al., 2021, p. 594.

¹⁰ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/08/27/iconic-thumbs-down-vote-that-summed-up-john-mccains-career/>; as cited in Şahin et al., 2021, p. 594.

convert existing officials in policymaking roles into political positions, which eliminated their employment protections and opened the door for the president and his appointees to fire potentially hundreds or thousands of officials.

Trump's governing of government officials and the public service relied on the presumption that he had a right to demand personal loyalty and fire anybody that he felt did not show him that loyalty. Trump had held an antagonistic view of the public service throughout his presidency and this hostility was central to his political identity. Trump attacked limits that were placed upon him as president and officials that he viewed as enemies, such as those who were involved in the Russia collusion investigation or provided information on his corrupt phone call to solicit political support from Ukraine. When Trump had the opportunity, he would demote or transfer these officials (Moynihan, 2022). It wasn't just the public service that Trump sought to actively undermine, as he fought against the application of the rule of law to himself. Trump has a lengthy history of obstructing justice (such as during the Russia collusion investigation into the 2016 Trump presidential campaign's dealing with Russia), and Trump's obstructionist practices continued as he fired Attorney General Jeff Sessions and replaced him with Matthew Whitaker, who was publicly called out for curtailing the investigation (Trautman, 2020). The administration took great offence to criticism from the national and international levels which further threatened and undermined the rule of law to favor those in the US that Trump supported. In the article titled "*President Trump Authorizes Economic Sanctions and Visa Restrictions Aimed at International Criminal Court*" (2020), it states that in 2020, the International Criminal Court (ICC) sought to investigate potential international crimes committed by US soldiers and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Afghanistan. This decision was strongly condemned by the Trump administration, with Trump signing an executive order to authorize economic sanctions against foreign persons who would dare involve themselves in the investigation and visa restrictions against those persons and their immediate family. The ICC issued a statement expressing how Trump's actions threatened the rule of law and interfered in the ICC's judicial proceedings ("President", 2020). Trump's governing as president included many unconventional practices, which continued throughout his presidency through his obsession with Twitter.

Fenster (2021) notes that Trump's followers and his opponents considered him to be a transparent president through the use of his Twitter account, as his tweets revealed the "real" Donald Trump, no matter the validity and the falsehoods of his tweets. Trump received assistance

from White House officials with his Twitter account, as well as official and unofficial advice on how he should use the platform, but his fascination with Twitter allowed him a direct channel through his @realDonaldTrump account to deliver his voice to the public in a way that no previous US president could ever before (Ott & Dickinson, 2019; Kreis, 2017; Stolee & Caton, 2018; as cited in Fenster, 2021, p. 26). Trump used Twitter as a governing tool throughout his presidency, as Hall (2018) argues that his use of Twitter allowed him to broadcast his viewpoints to the world without having to sit through interviews with the media. The media responded to Trump's tweets on a daily basis, which allowed him to control the news cycle in a manner which no other person has ever done previously (as cited in Harriger, 2020). Twitter gave Trump easier access to voters and greater control over messaging, which he also used to harm the credibility of institutions in the US that he perceived as a threat, such as the Department of Justice and the FBI. During the Russia collusion investigation, Trump tweeted 452 times about the investigation between January 2017 to August 2019, with nearly half of those tweets (224) using the term "witch hunt" to describe the investigation. The next closest topic during that time span being "Fake News" with 352 tweets (Harriger, 2020).

Trump's governing through social media and opposition to the rule of law continued through to the end of his presidency, as Trump used Twitter to undermine public confidence in the voting process, with a particular focus on mail-in ballots that were used during the Covid-19 pandemic. To attack the voting process, Trump alleged that there was an illegal plot to rob mailboxes, forge ballots, and illegally print and "fraudulently" sign them, which would ultimately result in a "Rigged Election" (Fried & Harris, 2020). Brian Naylor¹¹ notes that Trump's claims of election fraud fueled the fires of the January 6th, 2021, insurrection on the US Capitol building in an attempt to stop the certification of Joe Biden's win in the 2020 presidential election (as cited in Kang & Eisler, 2022, p. 1958). Of the insurrectionists that stormed the Capitol building, one person carried a noose, another wore a "Camp Auschwitz" shirt,¹² and several carried Trump, Make America Great Again, and Confederate flags. Five people were left dead after the attack and Trump was later acquitted by the US Senate, which allowed Trump to

¹¹ See Brian Naylor, Read Trump's Jan. 6 Speech, A Key Part Of Impeachment Trial, NPR (Feb. 10, 2021, 2:43 PM), <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/10/966396848/read-trumps-jan-6-speech-a-key-part-of-impeachment-trial> [https://perma.cc/XT4K-HUZ8]; as cited in Kang & Eisler, 2022, p. 1958.

¹² David K. Li and Shamar Walters, Man in 'Camp Auschwitz' shirt, photographed at US Capitol Riot, Arrested in Virginia, NBCNews, January 13, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/man-camp-auschwitz-shirt-photographed-u-s-capitol-riot-arrested-n1254070>; as cited in Hopkinson, 2021, p. 483.

escape accountability for his role in the insurrection (Hopkinson, 2021). Kang & Eisler (2022) also note that this is not the first time that Trump governed by encouraging violence as he has a long history of incitement, such as when he encouraged his supporters to attack peaceful protesters at his rallies. Klarman states that Trump had encouraged his supporters and government agents to use violent tactics to advance his political agenda (as cited in Kang & Eisler, 2022, p. 1958), and in an attempt to suppress the role of the media, Trump had also called for violence against reporters (Id, as cited in Kang & Eisler, 2022, p. 1958). Support for Trump extended across different factions of the right-wing ideology, which includes the far-right sections of conservative politics that supported violence to achieve Trump's vision of the US.

The Appeal of Trump to Those on the Right and Beyond

There are numerous factors that account for conservative support for Trump, which include race (whites), gender, being pro-business, and being pro-life/anti-choice¹³ (as cited in Adams, 2021, p. 84). Other scholars (Binder and Wood 2013a; Adams 2019; Berlinerblau 2019) have found connections between religion (primarily white evangelical Christianity) and political conservatism, which have become particularly associated with Trump (as cited in Adams, 2021, p. 84), as he was seen by many evangelical supporters as a protector of evangelical Christianity and that he was a candidate chosen by God (Adams 2019; Berlinerblau 2019; as cited in Adams, 2021, p. 84).

Trump's early candidacy in 2016 drew the support of individuals like Sarah Palin, Carl Icahn and Dennis Rodman, but did not attract many prominent endorsements. Those that did, however, offered several reasons for their endorsements, such as favorably viewing his rhetoric and temperament, his business experience, and his national security policy positions. These early supporters favored his anti-establishment populist message of "Make America Great Again" (Albert & Barney, 2019). Support for authoritarianism played a role as well, as authoritarian values was associated with support for Trump over Hillary Clinton¹⁴ (as cited in Womick et al., 2019, p. 643). Such support was seen in the endorsements of Trump that extended far beyond the

¹³ Kidder 2016; Blackett 2017; Edgell 2017; Junn 2017; Tien 2017; Hills 2018; Pruitt 2018; as cited in Adams, 2021, p. 84.

¹⁴ Choma & Hanoach, 2017; see also Azevedo, Jost, & Rothmund, 2017; Ludeke et al., 2018; Pettigrew, 2017; Smith & Hanley, 2018; as cited in Womick et al., 2019, p. 643.

political sphere and the rich and famous, as Trump received open support from white nationalist leaders David Duke and Richard Spencer¹⁵ (as cited in Ruisch & Ferguson, 2023, p. 207), with Lombroso and Applebaum (2016) noting that Richard Spencer was quoted saying “Hail Trump, hail our people, hail victory” to far-right supporters in Washington, DC within days of Trump winning the election (as cited in Feinberg et al., 2022, p. 257). As well, far-right groups like the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, the Three Percenters, and QAnon conspiracy theorists joined the US Capitol insurrection on January 6th, 2021, to support Trump’s attempts at remaining in power (Hill, 2021; as cited in Fuchs, 2021, p. 246).

Trump supporters have been shown to support overt social biases that reject equal rights advancements and social justice efforts due to being more racist, classist, and sexist than other US citizens¹⁶ (as cited in Cech, 2017, p. 1). They shared Trump’s prejudices and supported domineering, aggressive leaders compared to other voters (Smith & Hanley, 2018). Kayam (2017) argues that Trump’s use of a simple, low-readability-level language (fourth-to-fifth grade level, or 9–11-year-olds) was an intentional strategy by Trump to gain popularity through the use of anti-intellectualism, which decreased the value of knowledge, intelligence, science, academia, and intellectuals (Kayam, 2018, p. 184). In a study by Dignam et al. (2021), twenty-nine Trump supporters of various age, classes, and educational backgrounds were interviewed, and they found that there was strong support for Trump based on his political incorrectness, which his supporters believe as enabling Trump to effectively address the US’ problems. To Trump’s supporters, political correctness is a constraint that suppresses self-expression and free speech (p. 375). The same study by Dignam et al. (2021) found the 20 of 29 respondents expressed positive sentiments of Trump’s business expertise and that respondents often stated that they think Trump’s managerial prowess would translate over to being an effective president. As well, since Trump was not a politician and was financially successful, he wouldn’t be influenced by corporations, donors, and other political operators (p. 380). Finally, respondents of this study supported Trump’s ‘fighting spirit’ of not backing down from a fight, and they believed that Trump being elected as the commander and chief of the military would help US national interests by compelling other countries to defer to them (Dignam et al., 2021).

¹⁵ www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/06/trump-racism-comments/588067/; as cited in Ruisch & Ferguson, 2023, p. 207.

¹⁶ (e.g., Apuzzo 2017; Bialik 2017; Khazan 2016; Luttig, Federico, and Lavine 2016; Mulligan 2017; Nelson 2016; as cited in Cech, 2017, p. 1.

Trump promised his supporters that they would receive their due after too many years of suffering in silence (as cited in Lamont, 2017, p. S154), as white working-class citizens in the US tend to view themselves as the invisible and under-recognized ‘backbone’ of society that do not receive recognition for being the ones that keep the US economy going (Lamont 2017; as cited in Lamont et al., 2017, p. S154). These workers believe that they ‘deserve better’ than how they’ve been treated and for the country to recognize their value and contributions. In response to these sentiments, many of these workers rose in protest and anger to support Trump during the 2016 presidential election¹⁷ (as cited in Lamont, 2017, p. S154). Trump played upon the citizen’s fears of globalization that is associated with neoliberalism, which heightened the fears that immigrants were supposedly receiving benefits while the interests of native-born US citizens are being ignored. Efforts to combat nativist and anti-immigrant sentiments were met with accusations of compromising the safety of US-born citizens in order to be “politically correct” (Finley & Esposito, 2020).

From the beginning, Trump’s political rhetoric incorporated far-right values into his bids for president, as Pérez-Curiel and Limón-Naharro (2019) highlight how Trump utilized far-right populism in his 2016 campaign, such as through his effective use of storytelling on Twitter (as cited in Pérez-Curiel et al., 2021). Populist rhetoric was apparent through his opposition to positions like globalization, integration, establishment politics (Mudde 2016; as cited in Pérez-Curiel et al., 2021), immigration, acceptance of refugees, and the religion of Islam (Wodak 2015; Fuchs 2017; as cited in Pérez-Curiel et al., 2021). The use of Trump’s popular MAGA slogan was also used in the hashtag #MakeAmericaGreatAgain (#MAGA), which allowed hate groups to unite over Twitter (Eddington, 2018; as cited in Hayes, 2021, p. 20). The ability to connect with others, even over vast geographical spaces, was an affordance that encouraged activism, and provided agency and the ability to organize for those who wished to spread hate with ease (Hayes, 2021, p. 20).

Trump’s campaign rhetoric also resonated with the far-right in the US, which could be witnessed through the rapid growth of pro-white movements like the Alternative Right (Alt-Right), and that US-based white supremacists devoted physical, financial, and rhetorical support

¹⁷ “We do not have psychological data to address whether working-class anger and resentment are expressions of a need for recognition. For the purpose of this paper, we posit this relationship”; as cited in Lamont et al., 2017, p. S154.

to Trump’s presidential bid (Barnett, 2018). This could be identified through pro-Trump material among white supremacists, such as Trump-supportive material being posted on The Daily Stormer and Stormfront, which are neo-Nazi websites and are the two most prominent US-based white supremacist websites. The Daily Stormer endorsed Trump for president on their website on June 28th, 2015, less than two weeks after Trump announced his candidacy for the presidency, and both websites posted celebratory commentary after the 2016 election results indicated that Trump had won the presidency (Barnett, 2018). In August 2017, Klu Klux Klan (KKK) members, neo-Nazis, and other white supremacists marched on Charlottesville, North Carolina.¹⁸ The rallies became violent and resulted in a white supremacist driving his car into a group of counter-protesters, resulting in the death of one counter-protester.¹⁹ After the protests subsided, Trump claimed that “many sides” were responsible for the violence and was reluctant to denounce white supremacy, which gave the impression of acceptance or endorsement of such bigotry²⁰ (Todres, 2018). Trump continued to embolden white supremacists as the 2020 presidential election approached, such as during that fall’s first presidential debate. Trump was asked by debate moderator Chris Wallace to disavow white supremacy, where Trump instead said, “Proud Boys, stand back and stand by” (the Proud Boys are labeled as a hate group by the Southern Law Poverty Center and an extremist group by the FBI).²¹ Within minutes of Trump making that comment, the Proud Boys claimed on social media that this was a “historic” moment for the group to have the president endorse them and their tactics²² (Demaske, 2022).

¹⁸ Sheryl Gay Stolberg & Brian M. Rosenthal, Man Charged After White Nationalist Rally in Charlottesville Ends in Deadly Violence, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 12, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/12/us/charlottesville-protest-white-nationalist.html>.; as cited in Todres, 2018, p. 331.

¹⁹ Id; as cited in Todres, 2018, p. 332.

²⁰ Meghan Keneally, Fallout from Trump’s Charlottesville Response Lands Far and Wide, ABC NEWS (Aug. 25, 2017, 11:14 AM), <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/fallout-trumps-charlottesville-response-lands-wide/story?id549397050> (“Trump’s initial statements—including that ‘many sides’ incited the violence and that there were ‘very fine’ people among both the group of white supremacist and counterprotesters—[sic] prompted widespread condemnation”). Eyewitness reports and investigations reveal Trump’s version as counterfactual; see, e.g., Ian Shapira, Finding the White Supremacists Who Beat a Black Man in Charlottesville, WASH. POST, Aug. 31, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/finding-the-white-supremacistswho-beat-a-black-man-in-charlottesville/2017/08/31/9f36e762-8cfb-11e7-84c0-02cc069f2c37_story.html?utm_term=.55fec8f2f2a5 (“The videos [of six white supremacists attacking an African-American man] show how the beating unfolded, revealing its brutality and shocking speed from multiple perspectives.”); Charlottesville: Race and Terror, VICE NEWS (Aug. 21, 2017), <https://news.vice.com/story/vice-news-tonight-full-episode-charlottesville-race-and-terror> (showing footage from a journalist embedded with White supremacists in Charlottesville in which White supremacists express bigotry and racist views and a willingness to use violence if necessary).; as cited in Todres, 2018, p. 331.

²¹ Haltiwanger, “Attorney General sues.”; as cited in Demaske, 2022, p. 93.

²² Frenkel and Karni, “Proud Boys celebrate.”; as cited in Demaske, 2022, p. 93.

Trump's appeal to the far-right has led to deadly consequences, such as the US Capitol building insurrection. On January 6th, 2021, thousands of Trump supporters and hate group members stormed the Capitol building after being told by Trump earlier that day that they must "fight like hell" during the 'Stop the Steal' rally in Washington, DC (Naylor, 2021; as cited in Hodwitz & Massingale, 2023, p. 303). Schwartzman (2021) notes that Trump's incitement of the Capitol insurrection was Trump's clearest use of his weaponized communication rhetorical tactic as Trump and the Republican Party perpetuated the conspiracy that the 2020 presidential election was "rigged" and "stolen" (as cited in Diep & Nguyen, 2023). To Trump and his supporters, Trump represented 'America' and 'American interests', while the political opposition were 'Anti-American'. This distinction was used to support his claims that the 2020 election must have been stolen and that there was no way that Trump could have lost, thus by contesting the results of the election, Trump was therefore standing up for the country (Haslam et al., 2023).

The increase in violent actions during Trump's presidency highlighted the support for Trump and his rhetoric, as Trump's election in 2016 has been empirically associated with an increase in hate crimes (Edwards & Rushin, 2018; as cited in Piazza & Van Doren, 2023, p. 299). For example, after the 2016 election, a quarter of perpetrators that committed hate crimes in Florida indicated that Trump, his policies, and his statements encouraged their attacks (Lipscomb, 2017; as cited in Piazza & Van Doren, 2023, p. 299), and Nacos et al. (2020) reported that threats of violence and violent acts had increased during Trump's presidency (as cited in Piazza & Van Doren, 2023, p. 299). Trump's presidency concluded in January 2021 after the attack on the US Capitol building²³ (Piazza & Van Doren, 2023), and despite the attempted insurrection, many Republicans in the House of Representatives and the Senate continued to support Trump and still voted against certifying the 2020 election results in the states of Arizona and Pennsylvania within hours of the attack on the US Capitol building (Bartels & Carnes, 2023). As Trump did not make explicit calls for his supporters to attack the Capitol building, many Republican Senators stood behind Trump and claimed that his personal responsibility for the inciting the attack could not be proven (Haslam et al., 2023).

²³ "It is important to note some current research that is not consistent with evidence linking Trump approval to support for political violence. For example, Clayton et al., 2021 fail to find experiment subjects exposed to tweets by Trump alleging electoral fraud or expressing antidemocratic norms to be more likely to approve of political violence. However, Trump supporters exposed to such treatments are more likely to believe that U.S. elections are rigged. This finding is also discussed in Weinschenk et al. (2021)."; as cited in Piazza & Van Doren, 2023.

After Trump's presidency ended, he continued to amass and maintain an abundance of support from across the US, such as by US House of Representative congressperson Matt Gaetz, MyPillow executive Mike Lindell, and conspiracy specialist Sidney Powell (Hart, 2021). As well, there are others who attributed a literal mythical and God-like quality to Trump after his presidency was over. Villarreal (2021) notes that Christian prophet Johnny Enlow believed that Trump was still the president as "Trump can now be seen with a golden scepter and golden crown and protected by a "contingency of angels,"" while Enlow's brother-in-law, pastor Robin Bullock claimed that Joe Biden is "a jackal sitting in the White House seat." and that the rightful president (Trump) would be called back soon because "God will supernaturally move things out of the way" (as cited in Hart, 2021, p. 804). Conspiracy theories encapsulated much of the discourse surrounding Trump at this time as his supporters did not want to accept that Trump lost the 2020 election. In May 2021, far-right Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene said, "Tell me who's your president!", and was answered with a deafening reply of "Donald Trump" (Wang 2021; as cited in Hart, 2021, p. 804), with Palmer (2021) stating that supporters of the far-right conspiracy movement QAnon claimed that Trump had secretly replaced Biden as president (as cited in Hart, 2021, p. 804). Trump's supporters feared Biden becoming president, and they supported Trump because they thought that they were fighting to save the US from a "1984" dystopian-style New World Order (Isenberg, 2021) that would result from a Biden presidency. Many of his supporters wholeheartedly believed Trump's claims that the 2020 election was stolen from Trump and that he had actually won (Haslam et al., 2023).

Upending Presidential Decorum: Trump's Populist Rhetoric

Trump's rhetorical style was a substantial departure from the traditional style of other presidents. He was not the first politician to distance themselves from rhetorical norms, but Trump had effectively combined a style with content that violated political norms (Theye & Melling, 2018). Trump's rhetorical style remained relatively unchanged as he transitioned from a celebrity to being a politician, with the main difference being that the outlandish style of Trump would be applied to the wide range of policies that the president concerns themselves with (Theye & Melling, 2018). Trump's rhetorical style mirrored that of a populist demagogue instead of a traditional presidential candidate as he did not concern himself with careful deliberation and had a profound disregard for political decorum (Kristiansen & Kaussler, 2018).

Trump's deviation from the traditional norm of past presidencies highlighted his themes of the centrality of self and the importance of individual success instead of the nation and the community (Stuckey, 2019; as cited in Stuckey, 2020, p. 374-375). As William Galston (2018) argues, Trump views competition over cooperation central to the human existence, that big is good, small is bad, and that individuals are attractive or unattractive. There is a division between friend and enemies that is central to Trump's frame of mind (as cited in Stuckey, 2020, p. 378). In the following sections of this chapter, I present the methods utilized by Trump as he distanced himself from traditional political rhetoric as identified by the literature.

Anti-Intellectualism and Anti-Establishment

Connolly (2017) argues that the apparent lapses in sharpness of argument and cohesiveness of his speeches were an intentional and crucial rhetorical style of Trump. Trump characterized himself as being the opposite of a politician and someone who would offer the US something different compared to traditional politicians as he realized that anti-intellectualism and anti-establishment sentiments were sweeping the world (Kayam, 2018). Trump had emphasized the idea that he would be the "anti-political correctness president", as he had regularly touted that he would, when necessary, abandon politeness and reinstate the "strength" that had previously made the rest of the world respect the US (Finley & Esposito, 2020).

As many right-wing populists do, Trump established an anti-elitist rhetoric by breaking norms and insulting what was labeled as "the establishment" (Winberg, 2017), such as in Trump's (para. 10) inaugural address when he was sworn in as president, he attacked the "elites" of both parties by claiming that "the establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country"²⁴ (as cited in Rowland, 2019, p. 366-367). Bradlee (2018) argues that in the so-called 'Middle America', there is a shared belief that they are being marginalized, abandoned, and forgotten by the political establishment (as cited in Venizelos, 2023, p. 653). Trump utilized his disdain for globalization to attack the "corrupt political establishment" which welcomed cheap illegal immigrant labor, helped companies move jobs out of the US, and made deals with countries that supported Islamic terrorism. Trump claimed that this political establishment was rewarded by a "global power structure" that was funded by the financial and media corporations,

²⁴ Donald J. Trump, "Inaugural Address," January 20, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/inaugural-address>, 2-5. Further references will be cited by paragraph number; as cited in Rowland, 2019, p. 366-367.

along with the “Washington establishment”²⁵ (Trump, 2016; as cited in Smith & King, 2021, p. 464). Trump used the terms “ruling class” and “elites” to reference an abstract group of invisible power brokers that worked in tandem with the media to promote “globalist” interests, including the political opposition whom Trump suggested had networks of power that are global in scale (Kelly, 2020). As Trump showed his authority as the head of the government, he would utilize Twitter as well to remind his audience that he was a political outsider that did not conform to the traditional Washington establishment (Gallagher, 2019). Trump claimed that it was the Democrats and the “ruling class” that were responsible for stealing the wealth from his supporters to fund a corrupt regime of power. As he attempted to relate himself to citizens through style or point of identification instead of one’s wealth, he promoted his successes while also attacking his “elite” tormentors (Kelly, 2020).

Trump’s persona as an anti-establishment outsider can help explain his economic nationalism, as he broke ranks with the Republican Party on free trade by implementing increasingly protectionist trade policy that would impose high tariffs on China and dismantle environmental regulations (Ashbee and Hurst 2021; Lowry 2016; Mayer and Phillips 2019; as cited in Kim & Knuckey, 2021, p. 685). He also withdrew the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and scrapped the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) before reaching an agreement in 2018 titled the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) (Crump 2019; as cited in Kim & Knuckey, 2021, p. 685). Humphrey (2021) notes that Trump believed that the establishment and its agents were hindering him as president and that the US was in mortal danger due to this hindrance (as cited in Haslam, 2023). Trump’s anti-establishment and anti-elitist rhetoric continued throughout the entirety of his presidency, as months before the 2020 presidential election, Trump warned his supporters that ‘the establishment’ was going to try and steal the election (Venizelos, 2023). As Trump attacked the ‘political establishment’ which he thought of as a destructive force for the US, he implicated the media also as a part of the establishment that was out to ruin him and what he wanted to accomplish.

²⁵ “Remarks at the South Florida Fair Expo Center in West Palm Beach, Florida.” October 13, The American Presidency Project (<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-south-florida-fairexpo-center-west-palm-beach-florida>); as cited in Smith & King, 2021, p. 464.

Undermining the News Media through Social Media

Lesley Stahl (2018) states that leading to the 2016 election, Trump told a reporter that that he deliberately attacked the press “to discredit you all and demean you all so when you write negative stories about me, no one will believe you” (as cited in Parks, 2019, p. 1168). Trump’s political style included a constant feud with the ‘mainstream media’, whom he would describe as being nothing but ‘fake news’ if any outlet challenged his narrative (Shanahan, 2019: 24; as cited in Venizelos, 2023, p. 647). During a political rally in April 2018, Trump highlighted his views of the news media as he mocked and insulted them by insisting that reporters would regularly invent sources and refuse to report his accomplishments, while also claiming that most reporters are “very dishonest people” (Parks, 2019). Baym (2005) notes the important observation that “fake news necessitates assumptions about some kind of authentic or legitimate set of news practices, ideals that one rarely hears articulated” (p. 261; as cited in Ross & Rivers, 2018, p. 2). By actively disparaging reputable news sources like CNN and the New York Times as being “fake news”, Trump showed the intent of equating his unquestioned assumptions and personal opinions to legitimate proof through undermining the idea of objective knowledge (Kristiansen & Kaussler, 2018). The presidential rhetoric of Trump has regularly used the term “fake news” to describe any news that is unfavorable to Trump, not news that is factually incorrect. The description of the media as being “fake news” has also been used in the worst cases to allege that the news media are the “enemy of the people” (Lee & Hosam, 2020). This “fake news” that Trump regularly alluded to would never give him the credit that he thought he deserved despite his nation-saving agenda. He expressed the idea that he was enduring an unending struggle with the media, as they were determined to portray him negatively as he equated this feud with the media with other forms of structural inequality. He considered the media to be a relentless and all-powerful entity that actively victimized him and his supporters (Kelly, 2020).

The rise of social media has shaped the content of the mainstream media and their affective style (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018). Theye & Melling (2018) note how Trump heavily utilized Twitter during his presidency as a direct line of communication with the public. Twitter allowed for the bypass of traditional media-created frames and for people to develop their own narratives (Hawthorne, Brian Houston, and McKinney, 2013, p. 553; as cited in Ross & Rivers, 2018, p. 2). Twitter became an indispensable tool for Trump, as this direct line of communication

to the public could be used without having to deal with the filter of the “failing”, “fake”, or “dishonest” news media (Abadi, 2017; as cited in Theye & Melling, 2018, p. 327). Twitter was used as a “crossover medium” by Trump as he promoted programs and shared links to websites that affirmed his perspective (Gross & Johnson, 2017; as cited in Gallagher, 2019, p. 188), such as content from Fox News like Fox and Friends, Judge Jeanine, and Hannity. Sean Hannity (a staunch Trump supporter) particularly attacked “the cabal that is the mainstream media in America” and stressed that “The mainstream media’s audience, their viewers, listeners, readers – they are not you, the American people. They are not the forgotten men and women in poverty, on food stamps, out of the labor force, that can’t buy a house” (Wemple, 2017, as cited in Gallagher, 2019 p. 188).

Commanding Unconditional Loyalty

Trump’s rhetoric also showcased a desire for the undying fealty of the Republican Party, which carried over to his supporters as well. He received reliable support from conservative organizations and from devoted Republican voters, both of which provide real consequences through the support of Trump’s threats (Galvin, 2020). The loyalty of his supporters ran so deep that in early 2016, Trump is quoted as saying:

My people are so smart. And you know what else they say about my people? The polls, they say I have the most loyal people. Did you ever see that? Where I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn’t lose any voters, okay? It’s like incredible (Pfannenstiel and Noble, 2016; as cited in Smith, 2023, p. 2).

His supporters would hound those who did not show their loyalty to Trump, just as Trump would use Twitter to attack non-loyal Republicans. He would also retaliate against defectors by endorsing and campaigning in support of primary challengers²⁶ (as cited in Galvin, 2020, p. 151), while Republicans in congress that supported Trump had little to fear politically (Bartels and Carnes, 2023). Trump and his team were actively on the lookout for any signs that Republicans would defect, therefore Republican candidates knew that the only realistic opinions before them were to exit or pledge loyalty (Galvin, 2020). Trump was able to rely on Republican Party loyalists in congress, such as to block measures that would restrict or reverse Trump’s

²⁶ Jonathan Martin and Alexander Burns, “Trump Endorsement in Georgia Race Surprised, and Frustrated, Some Republicans,” *The New York Times*, July 20, 2018.; as cited in Galvin, 2020, p. 151.

presidential overreach (Drezner, 2020). An example of a defector is former Republican senator Jeff Flake, who departed from the party lines that were created by Trump as his loyalties were not exclusive to a single person, as compared to the Republican senators that refused to stand up to Trump. Flake urged his colleagues to overcome their sentiments of loyalty (and fear, in some cases) which was responsible for them not challenging Trump (Chace et al., 2021). Flake felt that his position was worth-less as a sitting senator as his only hope for re-election was to align himself with Trump, but it conflicted with what he felt were his principles of independence as a traditional conservative. Flake said while acknowledging the possibility that he could lose the Republican nomination: “A traditional conservative, who believes in limited government and free markets, who is devoted to free trade, who is pro-immigration, has a narrower path to nomination in the Republican Party” (Full transcript, 2017, n.p.; as cited in Chace et al., 2021, p. 218). Another example existed within the US State Department during Trump’s presidency, where the inspector general concluded that Trump’s political appointees would utilize punitive measures against diplomats that they deemed were not sufficiently loyal to Trump²⁷ (as cited in Drezner, 2020, p. 396). When asked about the lack of officials in the State Department, Trump stated that “Let me tell you, the one that matters is me. I’m the only one that matters, because when it comes to it, that’s what the policy is going to be.”²⁸ (as cited in Drezner, 2020, p. 396).

According to Democratic Senator Sherrod Brown, Senate Republicans were motivated to be loyal to Trump out of fear, and that this fear was far-reaching since there was a devoted Republican activist base and a network of outside institutions and organizations that amplified and reinforced the influence that Trump held over the party. Brown states that:

“They are afraid that Mr. Trump might give them a nickname like “Low Energy Jeb” and “Lyn’ Ted,” or that he might tweet about their disloyalty. Or – worst of all – that he might come to their state to campaign against them in the Republican primary. They worry: “Will the hosts on Fox attack me?” “Will the mouthpieces on talk radio go after

²⁷ US Department of State, Office of the Inspector General, Review of allegations of politicized and other improper personnel practices in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, ESP-19-05 (Washington DC, Aug. 2019), and Review of allegations of politicized and other improper personnel practices involving the office of the secretary, ESP-20-01 (Washington DC, Nov. 2019); as cited in Drezner, 2020, p. 396.

²⁸ Elliot Hannon, ‘Trump on core State Department vacancies: “I’m the only one that matters”’, Slate, 3 Nov. 2017; as cited in Drezner, 2020, p. 396.

me?” “Will the Twitter trolls turn their followers against me?” My colleagues know they all just might.”²⁹ (as cited in Galvin, 2020, p. 151-152).

L. E. Smith (2021) concludes that Trump stoked partisan divisions and established Republican Party loyalty to him, which can be considered a far greater consequence than any legislation. Trump had threatened the future of the Republican Party as the party’s fate was tied to him and limited their appeal to white voters, which highlighted a refusal to acknowledge the examination of their 2012 presidential election loss (Cheney, 2016; as cited in L. E. Smith, 2021, p. 539). Loyalty to Trump extended to the ballot boxes, such as during a special election in 2017 for a US Senate seat from Alabama. The Washington Post reported on several allegations of sexual assault by Republican candidate Roy Moore (McCrummen et al., 2017; as cited in Krishna & Kim, 2020, p. 119). Krishna & Kim (2020) note that despite the allegations, Trump still endorsed and supported Moore in the election. According to the Washington Post (2017), Moore lost the election by a mere 1.5% of the vote and received 650,000 total votes, with 97% of those who voted for Moore having done so to express their support for Trump (as cited in Krishna & Kim, 2020, p. 119). Smith and Hanley (2018) argue that Trump’s supporters voted for him because they believe that Trump had credibility as a “domineering leader who insults and thwarts “line-cutter”³⁰ that determined their loyalty” (p. 13; as cited in Mollan & Geesin, 2020, p. 412).

Resorting to Insults and Name Calling

Insult politics is nothing new in US politics, but Trump’s mocking rhetoric has been widely considered and described as norm-breaking and extreme (Winberg, 2017). Trump’s rhetoric used language that can be considered as “an unholy tangle of lies, misapprehensions, disinformation and personal insults” as he utilized schoolyard nicknames to describe his

²⁹ Sherrod Brown, “In Private, Republicans Admit They Acquitted Trump Out of Fear,” The New York Times, February 6, 2020; as cited in Galvin, 2020, p. 151-152.

³⁰ ‘Line-cutters’ are described by Hochschild (2016) as people (such as immigrants, refugees, minorities, women) that are viewed by citizens as having “‘cut ahead’ by being given advantages and resources by the government.” (as cited in Mollan & Geesin, 2020, p. 412). This resentment exists “in communities that have not fared well in the last few decades, which has led them to feel they are the figurative ‘strangers’ of the title. This deep story involves notions of ‘doing the right thing’, working hard, sacrifice and being authentic Americans” while they are ‘waiting in line’ behind the ‘line-cutters’ (Hochschild, 2016; as cited in Mollan & Geesin, 2020, p. 412). This resentment is also caused by “notions that ‘elites’ patronize them and have shaped a narrative where sympathy must be felt towards the groups that the (usually left) elites have defined as oppressed” (Hochschild, 2016; as cited in Mollan & Geesin, 2020, p. 412).

opponents as he attempted to achieve vengeance and humiliation³¹ (as cited by Rowland, 2019, p. 373). Trump utilized insulting and demeaning language during his 2016 presidential campaign, such as when he attacked a debate moderator/reporter by suggesting that she must be menstruating,³² criticized a sitting senator and war hero for being captured³³ (non-Trump loyal, Republican senator John McCain) and claimed that another presidential candidate was supportive of immigration from Mexico “because of his wife”, who is a Mexican immigrant³⁴ (as cited in Stuckey, 2020, p. 378). Trump would also resort to petty insults as a method of tearing down his opponents and degrading them, such as calling them Lyin’ Ted [Cruz], Crooked Hillary [Clinton], and Little Marco [Rubio] (Schaefer, 2020). Michael Richardson notes that Trump had a tendency to amplify his insults by applying labels that disgust, such as speaking about John Kasich’s eating habits, Marco Rubio’s sweat, and Hillary Clinton taking a restroom break³⁵ (as cited in Schaefer, 2020, p. 8-9). Trump’s hatefully charged language continued until the end of and beyond his presidency. For example, he continued to hurl harmful insults throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, as he labeled the virus as the “Chinese Virus” and as the “Kung Flu” (Demaske, 2022), and when he tweeted “Why would Kim Jong-un insult me by calling me “old,” when I would NEVER call him “short and fat?”³⁶ (as cited in Gallagher, 2019, p. 189).

The Trump administration would dismiss the concerns of the Left, and he would attempt to harm them by referring to these concerns as “politically correct”, or by referring to left-wing individuals as “social justice warriors”, “open border” zealots, or “unpatriotic” (Finley & Esposito, 2020). Trump would also utilize Twitter as a tool to broadcast insulting language, with his tweets also showcasing a lack of civility (Hayes, 2021). Ott and Dickinson (2020) define uncivil communications as being speech that is impolite, insulting, or otherwise offensive (p. 63, as cited in Hayes, 2021, p. 21), while Twitter complemented Trump’s uncivil rhetorical style through its characteristics of simplicity, impulsivity, and incivility (Hayes, 2021). An analysis by Lee and Lim (2016) focused on two periods of the 2016 presidential campaign that covered two

³¹ Jonathan Raban, “The Tea Party and the Art of the Mean Joke,” *New York Times*, January 7, 2017, SR7; as cited by Rowland, 2019, p. 373.

³² *The Guardian*, 2015; as cited in Stuckey, 2020, p. 378.

³³ Schreckinger, 2015; as cited in Stuckey, 2020, p. 378.

³⁴ Chariton, 2015; as cited in Stuckey, 2020, p. 378.

³⁵ Richardson, “Disgust of Donald Trump,” 747; as cited in Schaefer, 2020, p. 8-9.

³⁶ @realDonaldTrump. (2017ap, November 11). Why would Kim Jong-un ... [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/929511061954297857>; as cited in Gallagher, 2019, p. 189.

weeks, and yielded results that found 10.5% of tweets by Trump during this time were uncivil, in contrast to Hillary Clinton not having a single uncivil tweet (as cited in Hayes, 2021, p. 20).

Trump utilized weaponized communication as a rhetorical strategy to govern throughout his presidency, where he would use a negative campaign style of vilifying his opponents by labeling them as having “foolish, inexperienced, ineptitude, irresponsible, disconnected, or evil” qualities (Gregory, 2015, p. 1; as cited in Diep & Nguyen, 2023). Trump had used this sort of exaggerated language to an unprecedented degree during his presidency, which he also used to spread conspiracies (Schwartzman, 2021; as cited by Diep & Nguyen, 2023), with Trump making over 30,000 untruthful statements throughout his presidency, which was fact-checked by the Washington Post (Kessler, Rizzo, & Kelly, 2021; as cited by Diep & Nguyen, 2023).

Using Hateful and Incendiary Language

Trump can be considered the first US president to embrace the utilization of widespread and continual use of hateful and incendiary language as a manner of connecting with voters (Demaske, 2022). His populist style of politics utilized profound degrees of nativism, conservatism, and outright racism (Venizelos, 2023). Venizelos (2023) provides the example of Trump’s nativist and nationalist rhetoric through Trump comparing the song ‘The Snake’ to ‘illegal immigration’ at his rallies, where they state:

The song (which Trump often referred to as poem) narrates the story of a woman who found an ill and cold snake outside her house and decided to take it in and nurture it until it becomes well. *‘But instead of saying thank you, the snake gave her a vicious bite’*. The woman is surprised, starts crying and asks *‘why? I saved you’*. The reptile responds *‘shut up, silly woman . . . You knew well I was a snake before you took me in’* (Speech 4; p. 656).

After his theatrics, Trump would tell the audience “this is about immigration . . . Illegal immigration, right? . . . They should come in through merit and legally”³⁷ (Speech 4; as cited in

³⁷ “Speech 4. Donald Trump rally, Manchester, New Hampshire (‘the snake’ excerpt) (10 February 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDRmR2SSXfk>, accessed online 10 February 2020”; as cited in Venizelos, 2023, p. 666.

Venizelos, 2023, p. 657), before stating at another speech that “These aren’t people. These are animals”³⁸ (as cited in Venizelos, 2023, p. 657).

Trump’s rhetoric of stoking racial fears started several years before his presidency commenced as Trump embraced the role of a conspiracy theorist by questioning whether Barack Obama was born in the US and questioned Obama’s identity and legitimacy as a US citizen (Kelley-Romano & Carew, 2018), with Parker & Eder (2016) noting that Jesse Jackson described Trump’s birther rhetoric as “coded and covert rhetoric for stirring up racial fears” (para. 15; as cited in Kelley-Romano & Carew, 2018, p. 34). As president, Trump utilized the idea of a homogenous people and a homeland that is threatened by a ‘dangerous other’ by employing an anti-immigration rhetoric (Kreis 2017; as cited in Kazzaz, 2020, p. 602). The person deemed to be the “other”, as David Remnick (2017) states is a tactic used by Trump to place blame on certain groups/individuals (ethnic minorities, immigrants) through the politics of resentment, where he claimed that they have closed your factories, taken your jobs, and threatened your safety (p. 20; as cited in Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018, p. 770). Trump tried to appeal to the public by fabricating an image that refugees are terrorists and the development of discursive strategies. This allowed Trump to impose a narrative that would allow him to win the presidency, and he would utilize this rhetoric to develop actual policies, such as his travel ban from several predominantly Muslim countries (Kazzaz, 2020).

Validating Fear

Trump’s rhetoric was seen as an extension of the fear of shifting away from white masculinity (Ott and Dickinson, 2019; as cited in Kelly, 2020, p. 3). Trump’s use of language that centered around strength and victimhood allowed his supporters to disavow hegemonic whiteness and believe that they are being marginalized and politically exiled (Johnson, 2017; as cited in Kelly, 2020, p. 3). Trump’s rhetoric insisted that liberal policies were resulting in cultural, physical, and economic victimization of US citizens. Trump regularly made proposals that implied that the public needed to be protected from liberal policies, such as race-conscious

³⁸ “Speech 5. ‘These people are animals’. Trump’s remarks on migrants (16/5/18), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-california-sanctuary-state-roundtable/>, accessed online 9 September 2020”; as cited in Venizelos, 2023, p. 666.

measures, that supposedly only served the globalist elites (Smith & King, 2021). Trump³⁹ would explicitly promote his white nationalist rhetoric and suppress efforts to reduce racial inequalities, such as when he termed his “new civil rights agenda for our time”, which involved strong policing, school choice, and deregulation to promote jobs without making any reference to race (as cited in Smith & King, 2021, p. 464). He continued to make these messages explicitly clear, including through his Twitter account. Trump would tweet accounts of, especially, white citizens being victims of crimes committed by African Americans, and twice retweeting from a Twitter user called “WhiteGenocideTM” (Kopan 2016; Confessore 2016, Holmes 2017; as cited in Smith & King, 2021, p. 464). Through the use of nationalist populism and a charismatic outsider persona, Trump was able to tap into alienation and perceived loss of opportunities among the white working-class, which favored Trump as a sense of group solidarity was developed. It created solidarity through scapegoating others for their misfortunes, providing enemies to hate, and giving the impression of a hero (Trump) that would return the US to a nostalgic past that was filled with opportunity. It further solidified group solidarity by embracing the idea that Trump’s supporters are the “real Americans” that are the heart and soul of the US, and that they are being oppressed by elites and “others”, who are not considered “real” Americans because of their race, gender, or identity (Rowland, 2019). Trump’s support for group solidarity was centered around fear, and this fear was utilized to stoke anger in his supporters to make them feel like they were being wronged by society.

Inciting Anger and Violence

Trump’s rhetorical style utilized anger as a prominent feature of his populist rhetoric, as Trump’s ‘angry populism’ sought to appeal to the deliberate anger of people and feed a journalistic narrative that understands anger as a core aspect of political life. This anger, although it does not always have to be directed at a particular individual or group, it can be used to target the political establishment, cultural and economic elites, women, migrants, ethnic minorities, and anyone that is perceived as a threat to US interests (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018). Trump had utilized this anger to mobilize his supporters as they believed that their ‘American Dream’ and their

³⁹ ““Remarks at the Cleveland Arts and Sciences Academy in Cleveland, Ohio.” September 8, The American Presidency Project (<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-cleveland-arts-and-social-sciences-academy-cleveland-ohio>); as cited in Smith & King, 2021, p. 464.

legacy as white people were being threatened and taken away (Hayes, 2021). The anger of Trump's supporters was mobilized to portray them as powerless but invulnerable, which Trump could capitalize on by utilizing their anger and bitterness to warrant cruelty against the ever-growing list of people that were considered to be national enemies (Kelly, 2020).

Sectors of the public have stated that Trump's rhetoric has incited violence (Hodwitz & Massingale, 2023). For example, the Anti-Defamation League hypothesized that the substantial rise in reported hate crimes across the US was a result of Trump's white-nationalist enthusiasm (Feinberg et al., 2022). As well, in response to Trump's election, the Southern Law Poverty Center coined the phrase "Trump Effect". This describes how harassment and violence against minority populations have increased, particularly against people that have been singled out by Trump (Demaske, 2022), although empirical studies of the subject have had difficulties obtaining reliable, sophisticated analytical results. However, a study by Hodwitz & Massingale (2023) notes that the content of the rhetoric (such as Trump's statements directed at the Hispanic, Latinx, Arab, Muslim, and Asian communities) is positively correlated with the target of hate crimes and with an increase in hate crimes against certain communities.

Conclusion

Trump's 2016 presidential campaign utilized a right-wing populist approach to achieve power. According to Wodak (2015), three identifiable characteristics of successful right-wing populist movements are: (1) the invocation of a national 'heartland' or 'homeland'; (2) identifying a 'pure' community that are associated with the 'heartland' and are in opposition to people identified as 'others' not from the heartland, who are often immigrants; and (3) promoting a 'distancing dynamic', which maintains an antagonistic relationship between those identified as "the people", "the elites", and "the (dangerous) others" (p. 26; as cited in Mollan & Geesin, 2020, p. 410). Engesser et al. (2017) argue that there are 5 features of populism, which are (1) sovereignty of the people; (2) advocating for the people; (3) attacking the elite; (4) ostracizing others; and (5) invoking the "heartland" (p. 1109; as cited in Mollan & Geesin, 2020, p. 410).

The right-wing populism of Trump has been dominated with anti-elitist and anti-science positions, exceptionalist and exclusionary rhetoric, and aggressively criticizing his political opponents (Lacatus & Meibauer, 2023). Rothe & Collins (2019) note that Trump's presidency aimed at continuing an inept, violent status quo that benefitted the white, wealthy, powerful

elites. They also note that Trump's presidency inaugurated severe and neoconservative social setbacks at the expense of many, such as women, people of color, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ+ community, along with others that are viewed to threaten the traditional views of heteronormativity. Trump's fearmongering, populist tactics presented an apocalyptic worldview that told of demise and deliverance, spoke of individuals as winners and losers, and demonized those with whom he disagreed with. This rhetorical approach to governing is what differentiated Trump from previous US presidents before him (Çinar et al., 2020). Trump's speeches targeted supposed threats to the US by linking together the 'danger' of "femininity, minority standing, alien religions, disability, foreignness, weakness, responsiveness, vulnerability and dissolution" so that one of the mentioned items resonated with the perceived threat of another, thereby linking them all together (Connolly, 2017).

We can see that the literature has described Donald Trump as inhabiting a far-right political ideology, which includes the characteristics of being a white supremacist, authoritarian, and populist. The literature also points out that Trump inspired his supporters and attempted to draw in new followers by creating a sense of fear among his supporters, and that they had to band together to achieve Trump's mission to "Make America Great Again". Trump presented the US as having no future if he was no longer the president, and that a Joe Biden presidency would result in catastrophic consequences. He therefore presented his vision for the US, embodied the role of a mythical presence that his followers thought was sent to save the country, and used his presence on Twitter to communicate his goals to the public any time he desired without interference. This vision heavily incorporated the idea of him and his followers working in unison to keep the US safe from the Democrats, with the encouragement that the followers must go above and beyond the regular duties of a political supporter to ensure Trump's victory. This same vision sought to alienate members of society who didn't show him support, which resulted in many policies and initiatives to suppress them as they were viewed as obstacles to Trump achieving his goals.

Although much attention has been given to the aforementioned characteristics, little attention has been paid to Trump being a charismatic leader. This thesis analyzes Trump's tweets to examine Trump's charismatic leadership. More specifically, this thesis explores the characteristics of Trump's charisma, as it examines what his charisma looks like, identifies the rhetorical strategies that are used to express his charisma, and describes how his charisma feeds

into certain social and political worlds. Thus, this thesis seeks to answer the following research question: How does Donald Trump's use of charismatic leadership and charismatic rhetoric influence his use of Twitter as he engages with his supporters and those that he wants to support him?

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

Existing literature has been lacking detailed discussions of Trump being a charismatic leader, and in response, I wanted to explore this topic more thoroughly. Therefore, this chapter examines the conceptualization of charismatic leadership and the details of charismatic rhetoric.

Charismatic Leadership

Weber is considered the “father of the field” of charismatic leadership, as he is responsible for introducing the concept as a scientific term and in everyday language (Conger, 1993). Weber originally utilized a study concerning an investigation by the early Christian church into St. Paul’s use of the word ‘charisma’. This use of the word meant ‘gifts of grace’, which was used by himself and by others as justification for leadership claims⁴⁰ (Breuilly, 2011, p. 478). It was in the writings of St. Paul where the original use of the word was used, and in the work of Rudolph Sohm (1841-1917), where the term was reintroduced in modern times by examining St. Paul’s writings and other New Testament sources (Joosse, 2014). Sohm was important for Weber, which was characterized by Weber stating, “it is to Rudolph Sohm’s credit that he worked out the sociological character of this kind of domination” (Weber, 1922 [1978]: 1112, see also p. 216; as cited in Joosse, 2014, p. 267).

Weber used the word in his work ‘sociology of domination’ (*Herrschaftssoziologie*), which is where Weber developed his understanding of power. This work on power concentrated on subjectively meaningful relationships that are formed among humans (Breuilly, 2011). Weber identifies three types of legitimation in this work: traditional, legal-rational, and charismatic.⁴¹ Charismatic legitimation is validated through the extraordinary qualities of the leader.⁴² Legitimation, based on Weber’s work, is a social relationship instead of a psychological or

⁴⁰ In her introduction to the relevant volume of the MWG, Edith Hanke identifies Weber’s first reference to charisma as a sociological concept in a letter of 9 June 1910 (Weber 2005: 54). The secondary literature on Weber and his three ideal types of legitimate domination is vast. Hanke’s is the most authoritative introduction. For a brief, recent account in English see Potts (2009: chapter 6); as cited in Breuilly, 2011, p. 478.

⁴¹ The detailed arguments can be found in *Economy and Society* (Part 1, chapter 3 and Parts 10– 16). A short summary by Weber is contained in ‘The three pure types of legitimate rule’, for which see Weber (2004: 133–45); as cited in Breuilly, 2011, p. 478.

⁴² Elsewhere, Weber suggested a fourth type based on the community of the city-state but took this no further. The idea is tantalising because it could help flesh out what I will suggest is a specifically modern, impersonal form of charismatic authority; as cited in Breuilly, 2011, p. 478.

ideological one as it depends on those that implement what the leader wants (the administrative staff) and upon the social relations between the leader and followers to ensure that everyone acts as if they believed the leader's beliefs and rhetorical claims (Breuilly, 2011).

Pombeni (2008) insists that it is crucial to understand the timing of when Weber began theorizing charisma to comprehend how the western world was evolving. The high points of the idea begin with the period 1906-1913, then during the crux of the war (1917-1918), and finally, the critical point of the founding of the Weimar Republic (1919-1920) (p. 37-38). It is important to understand the background of Weber to understand how he formulated the charismatic leadership theory, as it was developed to explain the deemed inevitable 'political transition' all over Europe after the crisis of the *fin de siècle* (Pombeni, 2008). The first period corresponds with the early tension that appeared in the German political system. This time period was also a moment of intense debate across Europe on the 'crisis' of the liberal constitutional model. The second period coincides with the period when the majority of German intellectuals realized the recklessness of those in charge during the war and the falsehood of the 'bureaucratic' political set-up in Germany that was favored by the 'land powers' was superior to Anglo-Saxon liberal constitutionalism.⁴³ Finally, the third period was centered around the urgent problem of transitioning from one political system to another without any forces or personalities capable of tackling the transition (Pombeni, 2008). Adair-Toteff (2005) adds to the debate by arguing that Weber's interest in charisma began around 1910. It was at this time that Weber took interest in Stefan George and Rainer Maria Rilke (Marianne Weber, 1984: 463; as cited in Adair-Toteff, 2005, p. 192), along with Russian writers Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.

Laurence Rees (2012) notes, charisma is 'value neutral', as bad people can possess it just as much as good people (as cited in Behr, 2012, p. 210), but charismatic leadership has been incorporated in oppressive and fascist leadership tactics throughout history. Social and cultural preconditions were met in post 1930-Germany, where a charismatic situation arose as the Nazis made their sudden electoral leap-forward (Lepsius, 2006). Hitler's 1933 transition to the chancellor of Germany was due to his followers perceiving his victory as a means of overcoming

⁴³ It is well-known that the war had caused a rift among German intellectuals (especially university professors): cf. C. Tommasi, *Ragione, rivoluzione e costituzione L'intelligentsia liberale tedesca fra la guerra e il tramonto dell'impero (1914-18)*, in *Ricerche di Storia Politica*, 3 (1988), pp. 63-96; H. Joas, 'Die Sozialwissenschaften und der Erste Weltkrieg: Eine vergleichende Analyse' in W.J. Mommsen (Ed.), *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Welkrige*, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), pp. 17-29; C. Cornelißen, 'Politische Historiker und die Deutsche Kultur', in *Ibid.*, pp. 119-142.; as cited in Pombeni, 2008, p. 38.

the crisis. Hitler had argued that the problem to be dealt with was a result of evil powers that were conspiring to destroy and enslave Germany, and that the existing political order was a 'corrupt' instrument of the evil power. Therefore, they were labeled as being incapable of managing the crisis. He argued that their only salvation was to destroy the 'evil forces' and their replacements with 'forces of good', and only then could Germany be reborn (Lepsius, 2006). As Weber (2009) notes, genuine charismatic domination is grounded in the 'objective' law that emanates from the 'god-like' strength of the charismatic 'hero'. There is an exclusive glorification of the 'genuine mentality' of the 'prophet' or 'hero', and a complete rejection of any external order. This results in its attitude being considered revolutionary and a rejection of what is considered traditional or normal (p. 250). Hitler persuaded the German public into believing that something entirely new must occur, which was exemplified by the battle cry "Germany awake!", which represented the simultaneous emptiness and resoluteness. To his followers, there was a mythical generality of his definition to the situation, and they were offered a dualist simplification of the alternatives (Lepsius, 2006).

Kallis (2006) notes that Weber's charisma can be applied to Hitler's rise to power, along with other leaders of fascist movements, such as Mussolini, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (Romanian Iron Guard), Oswald Mosley (British Union of Fascists), Leon Degrelle (Belgian Rexists), and Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera (Spanish Falange Española). These charismatic leaders legitimized their authority over genuine popular movements due to their charismatic personalities, which was accepted by their followers and collaborators (Kallis, 2006). In the case of Hitler's rise to power, Kershaw (1991) linked Weber's conceptualization of a 'charismatic leader' with Nazism by writing that Hitler's dive into charisma started with a 'personality cult' surrounding him in the early Nazi party during 1922-23, but he fully embraced this charisma in 1924 when he was imprisoned in Landsberg fortress. It was at this time that that Hitler affirmed his charismatic claim, as he thought of himself as the 'Great Man' that German citizens were waiting for. This is the moment that he declared that he was presented with a 'mission', including to be the envoy of 'Providence' (as cited in Dobry, 2006, p. 158). Hitler then tested the 'strength of his word' (his ability to persuade followers and to test his prophetic and visionary skills) to different audiences. Hitler's personality (acting as the prophet and propagandist) is what allowed him to assume control of the party over his competitors. It was at this time that Hitler gained a small group of

followers and laid the foundations (charismatic community) of what his vision for the future would be (Kershaw, 1991; as cited in Dobry, 2006, p. 158).

Charismatic Leadership in Political Movements

Charismatic leaders address their ultimate vision of survival, honor, self-respect, and justice, but do not include the implementation of specific programs or practical solutions to everyday problems (Lepsius, 2006). By introducing detailed policy, the charismatic leader risks alienating their supporters, and losing the belief in their charismatic abilities they have gained from their supporters by sounding like a technocrat (Eatwell, 2006). Bryman (1992) states that “innovative, promising profound change and often offering novel ways of going about effecting change” (p. 63; as cited in Levay, 2010, p. 129) is typically used by charismatic leaders, which is promised through their promotion of social formation. This collective is supported by the charismatic leader by stating that they are going to bring about a new social and political order, offering a new set of values, or the prospect of a better future (Bryman, 1992, p. 63; as cited in Levay, 2010, p. 129).

Andreas Kalyvas has shown in their works that Weber’s writings offer two dimensions of charismatic leadership: an individual and a collective one.⁴⁴ (as cited in Pappas, 2016, p. 379). The individual dimension details charismatic leaders as creative agents that exhibit extraordinary personal attributes that appear to provide solutions during political crises and other emergency situations (Pappas, 2016), with the leader exercising power through their charisma over the group (Behr, 2021). The individual is able to showcase their potential ‘leadership potential’ through the possession of identifiable physical or social cues (Grabo et al., 2017). Attributes of charismatic leadership and its consequences are also part of a shared, collective group process (Platow et al., 2006). Charismatic leaders appeal to the group by using collective terms, such as the use of ‘we’ and through abstract language so they can create coalitions (Eatwell, 2006). The charismatic leader pursues their ‘vision’ by describing it to their followers and how they can achieve that vision through collective action (Grabo et al., 2017). Thus, charismatic leaders act as the focal point that coordinate individuals and groups of supporters to identify collectively and

⁴⁴ See, in particular, Andreas Kalyvas, “Charismatic Politics and the Symbolic Foundations of Power in Max Weber,” *New German Critique* 85 (2002): 67–103, and Kalyvas, *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).; as cited in Pappas, 2016, p. 379.

strive for communal goals, which increases their sense of a shared identity (Dal Bó & Dal Bó, 2014; as cited in Grabo et al., 2017, p. 480).

The role of the group in charismatic leadership is that it creates enhanced cooperation,⁴⁵ extra-role behaviors,⁴⁶ and enhanced social identification among the group⁴⁷ (as cited in Platow et al., 2006, p. 304). Structural *cooperation* is influenced by an established leader and is dependent upon the leadership style and the group members predispositions (De Cremer, 2002). De Cremer and van Knippenberg's (2002) research also supported the prediction that charismatic leadership gives rise to cooperation. *Extra-role behaviors* is supported by De Cremer and van Knippenberg (2002) as their research backs previous studies that show that fairness and charisma have an impact on cooperation among group members by creating a sense of group belongingness. Also, Deluga (1995) states in their research that their data shows practical applications for leadership effectiveness in organizational settings, such as their findings possibly supporting Graham's (1998) assertion that extra-role behaviours by employees constitutes the contagious nature of charismatic leadership. This means that employees who consider their workplace supervisors to be charismatic end up being committed to a shared mission, are proud to affiliate with the supervisor, and are motivated to do more than the job's duties of their own volition without formal rewards by the organization (as cited in Deluga, 1995, p. 1665). Conger (1989) and Conger & Kanungo (1987, 1988) state that it is possible that employees' willingness to go beyond their duties with no reward can be attributed to charismatic leadership theory (as cited in Deluga, 1995, p. 1665). This is when the supervisors' expressive behaviours are believed to be charismatic by the employees, which results in the employees identifying with and internalizing their supervisor's vision (Deluga, 1995).

Conger et al. (2000) claim that their findings show support for *group social identification* as they state that there is a strong relationship between charismatic leadership and collective follower identity. Their research supports previous studies by Meindl & Lerner (1983) and Shamir et al. (1993) that hypothesized that charismatic leaders use their vision to create goals and a collective identity for their followers (as cited in Conger et al., 2000, p. 762). Collective identity empowers the group through mutual support as followers endorse and support the

⁴⁵ (De Cremer, 2002; De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002; as cited in Platow et al., 2006, p. 304).

⁴⁶ (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002; Deluga, 1995; as cited in Platow et al., 2006, p. 304).

⁴⁷ (Conger et al., 2000; Paul, Costley, Howell, Dorfman, & Trafimow, 2001; as cited in Platow et al., 2006, p. 304).

message of the charismatic leader, which results in social confirmation of the leader's vision being an appropriate and worthy cause (Conger et al., 2000). Paul et al. (2001) state that their research shows a link between an increase in the charismatic aspects of a leader's message and an increase in accessibility of the followers' collective self-concepts. The followers' collective self-concept accessibilities are much higher when messages are delivered by charismatic leaders instead of simply routinized charismatic messages.⁴⁸ Conger et al. (2000) also speculate that by a charismatic leader having a strong sensitivity to the environment,⁴⁹ the perception associated by the followers ensure that the goals can be realistically achieved by the group.

There are also four important variables that are used to inform group members of the leader's positive orientation towards the group that increase charismatic leadership. The attributes of charismatic leadership are enhanced through the leader's *self-sacrifice* in pursuit of collective outcomes⁵⁰ or their vision for the group,⁵¹ the leader utilizing *depersonalized* (non-contingent) rewards instead of *individualizing* (contingent) rewards,⁵² having *successful group performance*, even if the success is just coincidental,⁵³ and the *emphasis that the leader places on collective identity*, such as the rhetorical use of 'we' instead of 'I'⁵⁴ (as cited in Platow et al., 2006, p. 304).

According to the Model of Self-Sacrificial Leadership, *self-sacrifice* within organizational settings is when a person's personal interests, privileges, or welfare is abandoned (either partially or completely) and/or postponed (either permanently or temporarily) in the: 1) division of labour; 2) distribution of rewards; and 3) exercise of power. The importance of these three aspects is that they correspond to the interdependent organizational process of an economic

⁴⁸ Paul et al. (2001) also state that their research suggests that's individualized consideration can cause an increase in private self-concept accessibility in followers.

⁴⁹ Includes four subcategories: 1) "Readily recognizes constraints in the physical environment (technological limitations, lack of resources, etc.) that may stand in the way of achieving organizational objectives"; 2) "Readily recognizes constraints in the organization's social and cultural environment (cultural norms, lack of grass roots support, etc.) that may stand in the way of achieving organizational objectives"; 3) "Recognizes the limitations of other members of the organization"; and 4) "Recognizes the abilities and skills of other members of the organization" (Conger et al., 2000, p. 759).

⁵⁰ (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999; De Cremer, 2002; De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002; as cited in Platow et al., 2006, p. 304).

⁵¹ (Yorges, Weiss, & Strickland, 1999; as cited in Platow et al., 2006, p. 304).

⁵² (Atwater, Camobreco, Dionne, Avolio, & Lau, 1997; as cited in Platow et al., 2006, p. 304).

⁵³ (Ensari & Murphy, 2003; Haslam et al., 2001; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Meindl, 1993; Shamir, 1992; as cited in Platow et al., 2006, p. 304).

⁵⁴ (Fiol, Harris, & House, 1999; Hunt, Boal, & Dodge, 1999; Shamir, Arthur, & House, 1994; Shamir, Zakay, Brainin, & Popper, 2000, 1998; as cited in Platow et al., 2006, p. 304).

system, which are production, distribution, and consumption (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999). Self-sacrifice in the *division of labour* is when people voluntarily take on taxing and/or risky aspects of their work in organizational settings. Self-sacrifice in the *distribution of rewards* is when people willingly postpone or refuse organizational benefits (such as salary or vacations) permanently or temporarily. Finally, self-sacrifice in the *exercise of power* is when people voluntarily refuse to exercise the position of power that they have (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999). De Cremer (2002) states that charismatic leadership has shown to be important in motivating group members by having a self-sacrificing leader that claims to promote selfless behavior. Shamir et al. (1993) also support the argument that self-sacrifice plays a role in charismatic leader behaviour (as cited in De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002, p. 864), while Yorges et al. (1999) state that self-sacrifice increases perceptions of charisma (as cited in De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002, p. 864). De Cremer & van Knippenberg (2002) argue that their research shows that procedural fairness and self-sacrificing–benefiting behaviour is mediated by group belongingness, but there is still the possibility that other mediators may play a role. De Cremer’s (2002) research demonstrates that a self-sacrificing leader is considered more charismatic and legitimate than a benefiting leader, and that although the level of self-sacrifice by a leader can be affected by people’s perceptions of their charisma, these perceptions do not appear to be a significant cause of the leader’s influence and effectiveness. Trust is important in this instance to the followers as it provides an important indication that it is safe to interact or comply with a legitimate leader. Tyler & Degeoy (1995) help this argument by defining legitimacy as “the belief that a leader is the appropriate decision maker and should have discretionary power to make decisions” (pp. 482-483; as cited in De Cremer, 2002, p. 1009).

Self-sacrifice is also important to the vision of the group, as Shamir et al. (1993) argue that if a leader is willing to commit personal sacrifices, it proves to their followers that they are dedicated to the cause, so the pursuit of the leader’s vision is considered to be more valuable than any personal losses (as cited in Yorges et al., 1999, p. 429). Yorges et al. (1999) state that followers’ acceptance of a leader’s position is heavily influenced by the leader’s sacrifice or benefit from their position, with sacrificing making the leader more influential while benefitting leaders are considered less influential. Sacrificing leaders are considered to be acting for internal reasons (e.g., moral convictions, sincere beliefs), which results in more influence over followers, while benefitting leaders are thought to be acting for external reasons (e.g., potential for

benefits), which results in less influence over followers (Yorges et al., 1999). Also, sacrificing leaders are able to influence their followers to make personal sacrifices to support the leader's "vision" over leaders that do not describe the resulting consequences or are benefitting⁵⁵ leaders (Yorges et al., 1999).

Atwater et al. (1997) state that their research shows *contingent rewards* do not relate to rating of a leader's charisma, and that *non-contingent rewards* were the type of leader behaviour that best predicted charisma. This is consistent with past research by Howell and Avolio (1993) that states that charisma is a part of transformational leadership, while contingent rewards are a component of transactional leadership. Leaders are more likely to be viewed as charismatic when they simply give out rewards (transformational) compared to leaders that reward based on performance or other behaviours (transactional) (as cited in Atwater et al., 1997, p. 147). Rogers (1961) argues that non-contingent rewards can be perceived by followers as an aspect of the unconditional positive regard of the leader (as cited in Atwater et al., 1997, p. 147). This means that the leader will regard their followers positively, regardless of their performance, which in turn causes the leader to receive the followers' respect and admiration (Atwater, 1997).

*Successful group performance*⁵⁶ is dependent on several factors. Ensari and Murphy (2003) argue that through individualistic and collectivistic cultures, the combination of prototypical behaviour and high outcome creates a higher attribution of a leader's charisma in comparison to their individual contributions. The results of Ensari and Murphy's study demonstrates support for the Kuhn et al. (2001) "Semantic-procedural Interface Model". This model suggests that people who are part of a collectivistic culture place value on supporting the needs and expectations of others so to maintain interdependence with them. By having interdependent self-knowledge be readily accessible, there tends to be increased attention on social situations (Kuhn et al., 2001; as cited in Ensari & Murphy, 2003, p. 62). For individualistic members, independent self-knowledge is more accessible, which means that people's judgements are going to favor autonomous contents (Kuhn et al., 2001; as cited in Ensari & Murphy, 2003, p. 62). Haslam et al. (2001) argue that their results counter the idea that

⁵⁵ "Benefiting is defined here as obtaining or the expected attainment of something valued or important to an individual" (Yorges et al., 1999, p. 428).

⁵⁶ Shamir (1992) argues that performance outcomes have an impact on the attribution of influence and the attribution of charisma to the leader. Shamir exercises caution with their findings, as they differ from the results of previous studies. For example: Shamir's findings of the attribution of charisma to the leader was higher when the outcomes of the performance were low instead of when they were high (Shamir, 1992).

charismatic leadership and leader agency lead followers to seek leadership where organizational success can be found. The results support the social identity approach to leadership, which indicate that such views on leadership are context-sensitive and meaningful as the followers depend on the results of their leader's behaviour as they develop the social identity that seek to represent. The research supports the process of a "*context-dependent categorical affinity between leaders and followers*", which believes that a shared social identity is related to the achievement of goals, and that these elements are important in determining if the leadership is perceived as charismatic or mundane. The followers must believe that the leader is acting on their behalf (Haslam et al., 2001, p. 202). Finally, the research states that attributions of charismatic leadership are more likely to be applied when a group achieves their goals by the leader going outside the "party line" and doing more. This behaviour encourages the followers to work towards the formation of new social and organizational behaviour, and a "collective redefinition of self" (Turner, 2001; as cited in Haslam et al., 2001, p. 202).

Bass (1985) stated that transformational and transactional leadership produce differing effects on followers. Transactional leadership is concerned with contingent rewards being rewarded to followers that are dependent on achieving results based on their performance (as cited in Howell & Avolio, 1993, p. 892). Rewards are expected to be achieved as the relationship between leader and followers continues and is mutually rewarding (Homans, 1961; as cited in Howell & Avolio, 1993, p. 892). Bass (1985) also argued that transformational leadership results in leaders influencing their followers to go beyond what is expected of them (as cited in Howell & Avolio, 1993, p. 892). Factors that may increase the followers' level of extra effort include how committed they are to the leader, how motivated they are to work, level of development, and their sense of purpose or mission that incentivize them to go beyond their required duties. By appealing to the shared values and self-interests of the followers, the leader can collectively maximize performance among their followers (Bass, 1985; as cited in Howell & Avolio, 1993, p. 892). Howell and Avolio (1993) argue their research indicates that leaders who used fewer contingent rewards and "less management by exception", and utilized "more individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and charisma" helped in achieving goals in business (p. 899). In relation to charismatic leadership, Howell and Frost (1989) stated that "charismatic leaders, irrespective of high- or low-productivity norms, produced among followers high task performance, high task adjustment, and high adjustment to the leader and the group" (as cited in

Howell & Avolio, 1993, p. 900). As well, Bass (1985) hypothesized that charismatic leadership has more of an impact on followers' performance in more tumultuous organizational settings than in more stable external settings (as cited in Howell & Avolio, 1993, p. 900).

The formation of a *collective identity* is crucial to charismatic leadership. The concept of frame alignment is an interpretive process that is used by charismatic leaders to motivate their followers in an attempt to inspire social change (Shamir et al., 1993; Snow et al., 1986; as cited in Fiol et al., 1999, p. 452). Frame alignment refers to leaders and individuals, where the followers' interests, values, and beliefs overlap and work together with the leader's activities, goals, and ideologies (Snow et al., 1986; as cited in Fiol et al., 1999, p. 452). Fiol et al. (1999) state that their findings suggest that charismatic leaders will use linguistic techniques that are used to influence their followers by breaking down, moving, and re-aligning certain beliefs. Language is a powerful tool as it has the ability to reflect and shape social norms and attitudes. Hunt et al. (1999) sought to test two basic assertions made by Boal and Bryson (1988) and found support for them by stating: 1) Charismatic leadership has two forms – visionary and crisis-responsive; and 2) when compared to visionary charismatic leadership, the temporal effects of crisis-responsive charismatic leadership will deteriorate greatly over time (as cited in Hunt et al., 1999, p. 441). They found that vision alone is sufficient to create a charismatic leader, and that crises do have an important role in charisma (Hunt et al., 1999). Shamir et al. (2000) state that in organizational settings, the prioritization of shared values and inclusive behaviours of the leader was shown to positively impact the social identification of company staff members. They note that leadership plays a role in organizational culture, and culture impacts identification. Cultural symbols play a role as well, as the leader's emphasis on collective identity impacted the social identification of the followers.

Weber wrote in his earlier works that political charisma is used by leaders to defy dominant worldviews as they strive to create collective entities based on “discourses of justification against the established order” and providing “radical founding of a novel structure of legitimacy.”⁵⁷ (as cited in Pappas, 2016, p. 379). Weber also spoke on the charismatic leadership within political organizations. A central component of this theory states that democratic systems offer the ideal conditions for charismatic partisan leaders to emerge as they are afforded the opportunity to campaign, and it is through the campaigning that this charismatic

⁵⁷ Kalyvas, “Charismatic Politics,” 71–2.; as cited in Pappas, 2016, p. 379.

partisan leader utilizes rhetoric to convince partisans of their heroic status (p. 1129-1130; as cited in David & Vila-Henninger, 2021, p. 597-598).

Charismatic Leadership and Far-Right Concepts

Charismatic leadership has played a crucial role in populism,⁵⁸ as no populist party has ever risen to power without a charismatic leader at its helm (Pappas, 2019), with populist politicians often regarded as charismatic leaders “that have fire in their belly” (Ceron et al., 2021, p. 1461). Weyland (2017: 68) describes charisma’s role in populism as being the glue “that can hold together a leader’s direct relationship to a mass of followers, and that can give this connection a deeply personal character” (as cited in Metz & Plesz, 2023, p. 319). Pappas (2019) continues by arguing that:

Populism typically displays four interrelated—and mutually reinforcing—characteristics: 1) a reliance on extraordinary charismatic leadership; 2) the ceaseless, strategic pursuit of political polarization; 3) a drive to seize control of the state, emasculate liberal institutions, and impose an illiberal constitution; and 4) the systematic use of patronage to reward supporters and crowd out the opposition (p. 71).

It is possible for charismatic leaders to exist in movements across the entirety of the political spectrum, from the far-right to the far-left⁵⁹ (as cited in Breen & Frezza, 2020, p. 55-56), including beyond charismatic right-wing leadership, where it can exist in liberal appeals to everydayness, and in new market ideologies like cryptocurrency (Bosworth, 2022). Charismatic leaders have continued to play a role to this day, including in the US where many hate groups, domestic threat groups and fringe political movements that support the use of violence had, and continue to have, charismatic leaders⁶⁰ (as cited in Breen & Frezza, 2020, p. 55). Despite there

⁵⁸ Jan-Werner Müller (2016:4) also states that right-wing populism exhibits three features: “attempts to hijack state apparatus, corruption and mass clientelism (trading material benefits or bureaucratic favors for political support by citizens who become the populist ‘clients’), and efforts systematically to suppress civil society.” (as cited by Mrozowicki et al., 2019, p. 212). According to Müller, populists “perpetuate what they regard as the proper image of the morally pure people...and then constitutionalize policies that supposedly conform to their image of the people” (2016, p. 37). As they do not see the political opposition as a viable option to control government, right-wing populists target minority members of the population and those that they claim to be ‘others’. They do this by claiming to be a representation of the ‘pure’ people, and focus on appealing to people in a cultural and nativist sense (March, 2011; Mudde, 2004; as cited by Huber and Schimpf, 2017, p. 148).

⁵⁹ Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020; as cited in Breen & Frezza, 2020, p. 55-56.

⁶⁰ Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020; as cited in Breen & Frezza, 2020, p. 55.

being some skepticism and critical voices⁶¹ to the charismatic leadership hypothesis, it is still a dominant argument in the literature that explains the success of populist (most radical right-wing) parties and politicians⁶² (as cited in Metz & Plesz, 2023, p. 319). There has also been a recent resurgence of the political right as their ideologies, affects, gestures, styles, and morals are promoted among new right-wing political leaders. At the same time, populist rhetoric has been circulated by charismatic party leaders, along with other individuals, the media, institutions, and social movements as far-right political parties and their leaders place blame on conventional liberal and neoliberal policies for various crises affecting the world (Bosworth, 2022). With the growing popularity of grassroots political parties that often have charismatic leaders, there has been an increase in platforms of ethnonationalism that exclude certain individuals or groups in the name of “the people”, which stem from the recent resurgence of populism around the world (Koch & Vora, 2020).

⁶¹ Charismatic leadership has been emphasized in past literature on populism (e.g. Weyland, 2001; as cited in Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 382), such as in descriptions of Europe, where populist leaders regularly work within organized political parties (e.g. Taggart, 1995; as cited in Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 382). Some scholars of European populism have made an argument that ideology or discourse is, at a minimum, as important as personality, and others argue that the entire concept charisma is imprecise or needlessly repetitive (e.g. Van der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie, 2005; as cited in Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 382). Also, van der Brug and Mughan (2007) argue that due to the difficult nature of developing an explicit definition of charisma, their explanation of support for populist parties (that leaders of populist parties do not have disproportionate electoral effects) cannot be studied for empirical falsification, which deems it useless for scientific explanation. van der Brug and Mughan (2007) also argue that criticism can be directed at supporters of the charismatic leadership hypothesis as they have not been able to precisely specify how charisma is able to manifest itself in the followers.

⁶² Mudde, 2007; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014; Van der Brug and Mughan, 2007; as cited in Metz & Plesz, 2023, p. 319.

Charisma is a valuable concept that can help explain what other concepts, such as populism, demagoguery,⁶³ authoritarianism⁶⁴ and neo-fascism,⁶⁵ cannot. Charisma has been used to rally supporters around a leader and their ideas, both around positive messages but also negative messages of discrimination and separation. The importance of charisma is that it demonstrates how a leader is able to garner their support and to achieve their objectives with that support. A leader can be populist, authoritarian, neo-fascist, or a demagogue but that does not guarantee that they will generate support and obtain a following. The use of charisma builds upon the claims that an individual makes and construction of certain political and social realities that they create. Charisma comes into play when one is able to attract a following that will support them and their claims of legitimacy. When a far-right leader is able to convince their

⁶³ Roberts-Miller (2017, 33) defines demagogy as using language to scapegoat people as a means of promising stability. It concerns itself with developing group identity, requiring grounds for exclusion, and punishing people that are excluded and deemed to be part of the 'other' or out-group (as cited in Parnell & Stuckey, 2023, p. 131). Roberts-Miller (2017, 8) also states that: "conventionally, demagoguery is about passion, emotionalism, populism, and pandering to crowds" (as cited in Parnell & Stuckey, 2023, p. 131). Schmidt-Hellerau (2020) furthers the discussion by arguing that demagogy utilizes three elements to appeal to people's primitive forces: stating that there is an implicit or explicit survival threat, alluding to people's primitive sexuality, and causing the exchange of a person's morals with a new orientation.

⁶⁴ Authoritarianism is the belief in a strictly ordered society, where disobedience to said authority is to be severely punished (Mudde 2007: 23; as cited by Mudde, 2010, p. 1174). Authoritarianism embraces nationalist tendencies, which includes incorporating a xenophobic rhetoric and anti-immigration policies into their party's ideologies (Giudici. 2021, p. 124). With xenophobia and ultranationalism being core aspects of authoritarianism, there is a promotion of discourses that are racist, full of religious animosity, hatred of those in the community, and incitements of violence (Ibrahim, 2019, p. 9). Authoritarian governments are inclined to concentrate on the political and economic power in the hands of a select few, and limit citizen's fundamental freedoms. Political freedoms are not guaranteed, and the rule of law is subject to how the government wants to interpret it, which can lead to minimal to no accountability or transparency (Ibrahim. 2019, p. 5). Authoritarianism also tends to be anti-democratic in nature, as they limit active political participation, have a low tolerance for civil society and for those considered the opposition, and also technology and science are actively used in a manner of control, manipulation, and intimidation (Ibrahim, 2019, p. 5-6).

⁶⁵ According to Cammaerts (2020): "Neo-fascism is a contemporary political phenomenon, rooted in an unsavoury past, which combines ultra-nationalism with nativism and celebrates racial hierarchy, as well as the desirability of inequality and privilege. It furthermore propagates an anti-intellectualism denouncing facts and expert knowledge, whilst persistently propagating blatant lies. Neo-fascism also cultivates victimhood vis-à-vis those that dare to critique them, and an anti-enlightenment agenda which actively undermines democratic institutions and values by using democracy against democracy" (Cammaerts 2018a; Stanley 2018; as quoted by Cammaerts, 2020, p. 241).

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supporters that they are fighting for their interests, they will use similar populist tactics to obtain further support for their societal claims. By using charisma, they continue to issue similar claims of being a self-sacrificing leader, but they have succeeded on taking on the role of a mythical figure to their supporters that will loyally follow the leader.

Mythical Attributes of the Charismatic Leader

Meng-tse's (Mencius') thesis that the people's voice is 'God's voice' (Meng'tse states that this is the sole way for God to be able to speak), specifically refers to if people cease to recognize the ruler, then the ruler simply becomes a private citizen. If that ruler decides that they want to be more, then they must become a usurper that is deserving of punishment. If the ruler wishes to continue as the holder of power, it is crucial that they continue to find success or risk losing the faith of their followers. The power of the ruler rests upon purely factual recognition from a devoted base of faithful supporters, as the followers can extend an active or passive recognition to the personal mission of this charismatic master. (Weber, 2009). This is a useful point in understanding charismatic leadership due to the codependence that exists between the leader and their followers. The followers support their leader due to the idea that the leader's promises will increase their quality of life. These followers are willing and content to support their leader while the desired results are being met, and as long as they are achieving their goals, the leader will continue to hold their position of power. They are willing to put themselves in situations that can lead to potential ramifications, but that is viewed as a step towards reaching their objectives. If the leader loses their support, they become a citizen with no legitimate authority, and they depend upon maintaining and attracting new people to their base to continue holding a position of authority.

The loyalty of the followers to the ruler is based on the extraordinary and divine qualities that appear during times of distress and enthusiasm. These qualities exhibited by the leader are viewed as strange as they have not been seen by the followers from any previous ruler (Weber, 2009). A person that is thought of as a charismatic hero obtain and retains their authority entirely through proving their 'strength' in life. The 'divine' mission of the leader must 'prove' itself to the faithful followers, which occurs through the followers' quality of life improving. If their lives do not change, then the leader is not going to be perceived as being sent by the heavens like charismatic leaders are considered to be (Weber, 2009). In other words, for a charismatic leader

to find success, they must be able to attract followers by showcasing their ‘vision’ for the future of their country, business, or organization, and then persuading people to follow them faithfully. The leader will appear and issue their promises to the masses during times of turmoil (such as political or economic difficulties) to capitalize on the negative sentiments of the people. They prove their ‘strength’ in life by brandishing their accomplishments, whether they are in their personal or professional lives, which is a necessity for them to gather and maintain their support.

The perception of a crisis is the social precondition for a latent charismatic situation. When there is an awareness that the perceived crisis cannot be overcome, it delegitimizes existing political institutions and hope grows that a ‘powerful’ individual will tackle the situation. The awareness of a political and economic crisis, however, does not automatically result in a propensity for charismatic leadership, as a political culture must exist in which such an option is plausible (Lepsius, 2006). When there is a charismatic leader in place and there is a belief of a perceived threat to their social power that can challenge the identification between the leader and followers, these leaders are more likely to experience more stress, take more risks, and allocate resources to benefit themselves over goals of the group (Anderson and Brion, 2014; as cited in Barreto et al., 2023, p. 233).

How Trump ‘the Persona’ uses Charisma as an “Ideal Type”

According to Max Weber, when addressing how an ‘ideal type’ is formed in his ‘Objectivity’ essay, an ideal type is:

obtained by means of a one-sided *accentuation* of *one* or a *number* of viewpoints and through the synthesis of a great many diffuse and discrete *individual* phenomena (more present in one place, fewer in another, and occasionally completely absent), which are in conformity with those one-sided, accentuated viewpoints, into an internally consistent *mental* image. In its conceptual purity, this mental image cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia*⁶⁶ (Weber, 2012d [1904]: 125; as cited in Rosenberg, 2016, p. 87).

⁶⁶ Weber M (2012d [1904]) The ‘objectivity’ of knowledge in social science and social policy. In: Max Weber: *Collected Methodological Writings* (ed and trans. HH Bruun and S Whimster). London: Routledge, 100–138; as cited in Rosenberg, 2016, p. 87.

Simply put, ideal types are a person's conception of reality and how they create a reality surrounding a certain social construct. These "one-sided accentuations" (Weber [1904] 1949, 125; as cited in Rust, 2021, p. 318) are when a recurrent social phenomena is roughly used by people that are told they exist within a particular social context (Rust, 2021). Ideal types exist to show that legitimate reality can differ from theory and the constructed realities and does not necessarily mean that an idea or construct is in an 'idealistic' form. The ideal type can also be used to sell negative constructions of reality to others, and it can be those messages that supporters rally behind. In its 'ideal type', charisma can be used by an individual to construct specific social and political narratives. Charismatic leadership in its 'ideal type' is when a leader uses their charisma to create their preferred construction of reality and is able to gain their desired support through their descriptions and representations of the constructed reality, even though it does not correspond to what is happening in the world.

Understanding how Trump's charismatic leadership is used in its 'ideal type' allows us to observe how Trump himself acts compared to the persona that is created around him. Although Trump's Twitter account was his own personal account, Trump did have aids during his presidency that would craft and post tweets themselves from Trump's Twitter. Trump's values and antagonistic personality were on full display whenever he spoke publicly, but through some of his tweets, these personality traits and his incoherent nature did not always come through. Trump's Twitter account was in complete contrast to how Trump speaks and formulated arguments when personally speaking to the public. Trump's speeches and interviews would often make little logical sense as he would switch between topics at a moment's notice and would speak in a rambling fashion that would form incoherent sentences. On his Twitter account, there were tweets that were formulated to state that he cared for all citizens to appear that he can make clear and concise statements in his speeches.

The concepts described earlier (populism, demagoguery, authoritarianism, and neo-fascism) are descriptors of Trump as a person and puts him in a box. The study of individual characteristics and descriptors of Trump can provide insight into how one acts in their personal life compared to how they desire to be perceived by others, even if their actions contradict the persona that they are portraying. By studying charisma and how it relates to Trump, it allows me to create a separation of Trump the person from Trump the persona. Through Trump's charismatic leadership, he attempted to publicly present himself as a self-sacrificing leader that

was looking out for all citizens by combating certain political and social ‘elites’. This illuminates how Trump wants to be seen and interpreted by others, and despite his actions and language supporting the contrary, this still created a divide in how the public see Trump and react to his messages and conduct.

Charismatic Rhetoric

The success of the leader’s mission and their charismatic claim is dependent upon the mission being recognized by their followers. The charismatic holder is the master over their followers if they are recognized by them, and they can continue to maintain this recognition by ‘proving’ themselves. The holder also does not obtain their ‘right’ through manners such as an election, but that it is the duty of those who the holder addresses his mission to, to recognize the holder as their charismatically qualified leader (Weber, 2009). The mission of the charismatic holder, with its meaning and content, is addressed to a group who are delimited locally, ethnically, socially, politically, occupationally, or in another way. By addressing the mission to a limited group, the mission will find its limits within that group’s circle (Weber, 2009). A leader’s rhetoric is thought (in some contexts) to be the main way that leadership is conveyed (Hart, 1987; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 157). House et al. (1991) state that large organizations and nation states must lead by inspiring and motivating citizens. This is accomplished by using their rhetoric to communicate their vision, as they are unable to maintain direct relationships with all of their followers (as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 157). When leaders do not use rhetorical skills, they will not be able to convey their vision effectively and convince their followers to rally in support. This will lead to the lower possibility of encouraging subordinates to increase their performance, commitment, and satisfaction⁶⁷ (as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 157). Shamir et al. (1993, 1994) note that charismatic leaders use rhetoric in several ways to influence their followers, such as by: 1) increasing the essential value of effort that is expended by the followers

⁶⁷ Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Gardner & Avolio, 1998; House, 1977; House & Shamir, 1993; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 157.

in pursuit of goals;⁶⁸ 2) increasing their self- and collective-efficacy perceptions;⁶⁹ 3) increasing their intrinsic value of goal accomplishment;⁷⁰ 4) instilling faith in the prospect of a better future;⁷¹ and 5) increasing followers' commitment⁷² (as cited in Davis & Gardner, 2012, p. 919). These motivational effects work together by exerting their influence, which refers to appealing to elements of followers' self-concepts. These self-concepts include self-expression, self-consistency, and enhancing one's self-esteem and self-worth (Shamir et al., 1993, 1994; as cited in Davis & Gardner, 2012, p. 919). Shamir et al. (1994) state that for charismatic leaders to achieve long-term success, they must go beyond short-term emotions of followers and participate in "meaning making" and "framing" (Conger, 1989; as cited in Shamir et al., 1994, p. 27-28), which is done by playing to the emotions and the intellect of the followers' (Shamir et al., 1994).

Bligh et al. (2004a) built upon the original conceptualization by Shamir et al. (1993, 1994) by developing eight dimensions of charismatic rhetoric, with these eight dimensions being: 1) collective focus; 2) temporal orientation; 3) follower worth; 4) similarity to followers; 5) values and moral justifications; 6) tangibility; 7) action; and 8) adversity (as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158). *Collective focus* states that leaders are able to develop a sense of community and unity among members of the organization by employing references to the collective organization over their personal interests.⁷³ *Temporal orientation* allows the leader to explain the position that the organization is currently in and emphasizes a compelling vision of the future by referencing the connection between the past and present.⁷⁴ *Follower worth* is when the

⁶⁸ This is accomplished by focusing on the symbolic and expressive aspects of the followers' efforts, meaning that the effort is representative of important values and that a moral statement is being made by one's effort (as cited in Shamir et al., 1994, p. 27).

⁶⁹ This is done by increasing the self-esteem and self-worth of the followers (self-efficacy) and emphasizing to the followers that they are part of an important and powerful movement (collective-efficacy) (as cited in Shamir et al., 1994, p. 27-28).

⁷⁰ This is done by highlighting how these goals hold value, which makes "the accomplishment of these goals more meaningful to the follower". This style of leadership provides a strong sense of group identity and collectivity (as cited in Shamir et al., 1994, p. 28).

⁷¹ This is accomplished by focusing on values, distal goals, and utopian outcomes. Leaders can gather followers by instilling faith in them of a better future, even if the specific goals are difficult or unlikely to be attained (as cited in Shamir et al., 1994, p. 28).

⁷² This means to "continue a relationship, role, or course of action and invest efforts" no matter the external costs, benefits, or if there are any immediate rewards. Charismatic leadership is able to motivate followers by developing personal commitments as it focuses on the self-concept of followers, by working to increase the prominence of certain values and identities, and by building a connection between behaviours and goals to the values and identities (as cited in Shamir et al., 1994, p. 28).

⁷³ Shamir et al., 1994; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158.

⁷⁴ Bligh et al., 2004b; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158.

charismatic leader will increase support and self-efficacy of followers by praising the followers and their value to the leader and collective,⁷⁵ while motivational language and praise by the leader causes the employees to strive for goals that were originally thought to be unobtainable.⁷⁶ *Similarity to followers* states that charismatic leaders are able to build a sense of community and an all-for-one mentality by focusing on the benefits of community and downplaying the differences that exist between them and their followers,⁷⁷ and the leader can create this perception by regularly highlighting shared experiences between themselves and the followers.⁷⁸ *Values and moral justifications* are how charismatic leaders frequently refer to values and moral justifications to inspire employees,⁷⁹ as it is through the use of language that employees values are complimented and challenged so that the leader can align the collective goals with the employees values (Baur et al., 2016). *Tangibility* refers to how charismatic leaders will create an intangible and less concrete vision of the future by utilizing flowery and grandiose language.⁸⁰ By using language that creates a less certain idea of the future, motivation will likely continue to increase among employees as the target goals move and become less concrete as the leader rallies their troops more-so around the vision itself and not individual goals (Baur et al., 2016). *Action* states that for charisma to be effective, the leader must motivate their followers with a sense of direction and purpose, as a call to action is crucial for the goals and vision to be realized.⁸¹ For charismatic leaders to achieve this, they must excite and motivate their followers⁸² by verbalizing a consistent, powerful, and meaningful vision that they are confident can be achieved.⁸³ And finally, *Adversity* is used to establish a powerful new vision by making employees believe that the vision for the future is superior to their current perceptions of the present, which is accomplished by contrasting the difficulties of the present with the vision for the future.⁸⁴ Leaders will often exaggerate the problems of the present to promote their vision as a necessity instead of just a desire (Baur et al., 2016).

⁷⁵ House et al., 1991; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158.

⁷⁶ Schroedel et al., 2013; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158.

⁷⁷ Bligh et al., 2004b; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158.

⁷⁸ Schroedel et al., 2013; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158.

⁷⁹ Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Shamir et al., 1994; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158.

⁸⁰ Conger, 1991; Willner, 1984; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158.

⁸¹ Fiol, Harris, & House, 1999; Shamir et al., 1993; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158.

⁸² Bass, 1990; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158.

⁸³ Bligh et al., 2004a; Conger, 1991; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158.

⁸⁴ Conger, 1991; as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158.

A charismatic leader utilizes their sphere of influence over those that identify with their message. The more influential a leader is, the broader the audience that they will attract, which may allow their message to continue long after death. The charismatic leader expands upon collective identity and focuses upon the homogeneity of their followers by highlighting the situations that are facing them and elevating them through rhetoric. An example of this is the rhetoric and ideology espoused by Adolf Hitler, which continues to have a strong influence today with neo-Nazis and racist skinheads (Breen & Frezza, 2020). Leader rhetoric is widely believed to play an important role in generating attributions of charisma among observers, along with the recruitment of followers and increasing their identifications with the leader and the mission (Schweitzer, 1984; Willner, 1984; Bryman, 1992; as cited in Shamir et al., 1994, p. 25-26). There exists a strong relationship that connects a leader's rhetoric and charismatic leadership, as through the study of rhetoric, a variety of specific methods have been proposed in the literature to measure or operationalize charismatic leadership (Bligh, Kohles, and Meindl 2004; as cited in as cited in Ghazal Aswad, 2019, p. 60). Shamir, Arthur, and House (1994) present several constructs for measuring charismatic leadership, such as shared identity, collective identity, the followers' worth, leaders similarities to followers, distant goals, moral values, and faith (as cited in Ghazal Aswad, 2019, p. 60). Also, Frese, Beimeel, and Schoenborn (2003) suggest examining components, such as metaphors, similes, stories, and rhetorical questions (as cited in Ghazal Aswad, 2019, p. 60). Fiol et al. (1999) draw upon Lewin's (1951) field theory that suggests that charismatic leaders are able to affect social change by employing specific rhetorical strategies that target followers' personal (desires and fears) and social values (convention and innovation) by changing them. Their results indicate that charismatic leaders are more likely than non-charismatic leaders to use negation, inclusion, and abstract rhetoric (as cited in Seyranian & Bligh, 2008, p. 55). This empowers the followers with strength and confidence to act through a perceived "sense of moral correctness" (p. 582; as cited in as cited in Seyranian & Bligh, 2008, p. 58). The leaders use persuasion by stressing the pre-existing values that help define self-identity, like dedication, success, and wisdom (see Watkins, 2001; as cited in as cited in Seyranian & Bligh, 2008, p. 58).

The use of communication is key for charismatic leaders due to its allowance for communicating a captivating vision, developing the acceptance of shared goals and values, and in receiving positive media attention (House and Shamir 1993; as cited in Olsson &

Hammargård, 2016, p. 553). By having relentless media coverage, it mixes public roles with private behaviors that leads to the ‘informalization’ of charisma, as it causes the everyday details of a politician’s appearance to be seen as informative or significant as policy claims (Pels, 2003: 45; as cited in Finlayson, 2022, p. 65). Aside from the traditional media, the internet has provided an unmediated space for political candidates to construct their own image so that they can come across as more approachable to voters (Pallarés-Navarro & Zugasti, 2022). For example, Antón-Mellón & Hernández-Carr (2016) and Mudde & Kaltwasser (2019) noting that it provides a key role for charismatic leadership to emerge and find success among populist radical right-wing parties in Europe (as cited in Pallarés-Navarro & Zugasti, 2022, p. 56).

Conveying their Political Rhetoric Through Image-Building

The concept of distanced charisma is an important area of study to examine voters’ relationships with a political candidate during a presidential election. This is due to the unlikelihood that most voters have met or observed the candidate in person, therefore their perceptions of the candidate will be largely inferential (Pillai & Williams, 1998). Shamir (1995) concluded that distant (rather than close) charismatic leaders are more likely to be characterized as having rhetorical skills, an ideological orientation, having persistence in their attempts to accomplish their mission, having courage to express their personal opinions without fear of social pressure, and to be more regularly attributed as having an impact political behaviors and attitudes. Distant political campaigns result in charismatic leaders being idealized and susceptible to image-building efforts (as cited in Pillai & Williams, 1998, p. 400). Public speaking and the power of language is crucial to a political candidate, and universality in language is utilized to appeal to the emotions of voters. The charismatic leader offers a black-and-white image of the world, and their version of the truth is considered the only truth. They convey this message by utilizing broad terms like ‘suffering’, ‘oppression’ and ‘persecution’, while using generic terms for relief, such as ‘healing’, ‘salvation’, ‘freedom’ and ‘emancipation’ (Behr, 2021).

Rhetorical Spellbinding

Weber (2009) notes that a genuinely charismatic leader must personally and actually be considered the God-willed master (p. 249). As charismatic leaders depend on being revered for

their God-like qualities, being on the side of God and associating enemies with Satan is a rhetorical device that is used regularly in speeches by charismatic leaders (Post, 1986). In Willner's (1984: 152) case studies of world-class charismatic leaders, they concluded that Biblical imagery, metaphors, folk tales, rhyme, and repetition are crucial aspects of their rhetorical spellbinding (as cited in Emrich et al., 2001, p. 527). Wilner (1984) sees this rhetorical device as an identifying feature in the speeches of charismatic leaders that heighten their identities as a leader that possess a supernatural force (as cited in Post, 1986, p. 680). This 'mythical' quality of the leader is used to invoke an intrinsic motivation in their followers to ensure that the leader's vision is implemented by the followers making personal sacrifices (as cited in Seyranian & Blugh, 2008, p. 54). This polarization of good and evil creates an *us* versus *them* rhetoric. This demonization of the enemy is a common political tactic that is used to unify the population against the outside enemy. The rhetoric of polarization is most effective when the enemy is believed to be the source of the problem, that *they* are evil, and that *they* must be eliminated to solve *our* problems (Post, 1986).

Conclusion

Charisma has been shown to be a complicated area of study despite the growing body of work by a multitude of researchers, although, charisma's association with leadership and rhetoric in political settings has played a crucial role in understanding how a charismatic leader gains support and implements their vision. Charismatic leadership and charismatic rhetoric can be used to better understand how certain political/group leaders can garner and cultivate their followings through direct and distant influences. Charisma in leadership settings provide insight into the qualities that individuals must exhibit to achieve their goals and the attributes that are associated with them in order for their mass movements to develop. There is also a mystical characterization of charismatic leadership and how they attract their followers, which builds a strong sense of community among the supporters that will continue to support the leader as long as they are accomplishing the goals of their mission. Therefore, Weber's conception of charismatic leadership, although outdated, serves as a beneficial guide to understanding the makeup of charisma and the characteristics that the leader(s) must achieve to build their following.

Based on this theory, I will be examining how charismatic leadership and rhetoric can be applied to Donald Trump in the current political climate of the US. Later in the analysis, I will look at Bligh et al.'s (2004a) eight dimensions of charismatic rhetoric (as cited in Baur et al., 2016, p. 158) and apply it to Trump's political style. These dimensions are a useful tool to better understand the different aspects of charismatic leadership and how a leader will incorporate their rhetoric into it as they work to attract followers and maintain that following. It provides the groundwork for how the leader will appeal to their followers and how they motivate them to achieve the 'mission' that the leader is striving for.

Chapter III: Methodology

Data Production and Analysis

Existing research has been limited on the charismatic leadership and charismatic rhetoric of Donald Trump, and this thesis seeks to address this by observing how Trump used his charisma over Twitter to interact with his supporters. To examine Trump's charismatic leadership, this thesis will describe the makeup of Trump's charisma, the rhetorical strategies that he used, and the social and political worlds that his charisma supported. To conduct the analysis for this thesis, the primary method of gathering my information was to examine Trump's tweets from his personal Twitter account, @realDonaldTrump. For this analysis, I utilized the Trump Twitter Archive v2 website (<https://www.thetrumparchive.com/>) as Trump's personal Twitter account was permanently suspended at the time that I started research for this thesis. This archive allowed me access to Trump's tweets in a timely manner, and the ability to sort them based on date and specific key words. This archive proved highly beneficial to the analysis as I focused on two specific time periods that were critical for defining Trump's presidency, where I analyzed every tweet from Trump (retweets were excluded due to the focus being on Trump's rhetoric) and sorted them into two separate categories. Although there are many tweets in each category that did not match the category title, the specific events that correspond to the category title were crucial moments of Trump's presidency and US history. In total, 4,329 of Trump's tweets were examined and coded for this thesis.

The first category was "Civil Unrest", which ranged from the May 25th, 2020, to September 9th, 2020. This time period is important as May 25th, 2020, was the day that George Floyd was murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This was a defining moment in US history as it brought attention back to the issue of racial justice, systemic discrimination, and police brutality in the country. In response to this incident and the widespread protests that followed, Trump labeled the protesters as dangerous individuals that were determined to destroy the US with the backing of the Democratic Party and the media. While refusing to acknowledge the existence of systemic discrimination in society, he called for the violent suppression of the protests and continued efforts to eliminate education initiatives that was meant to tackle discrimination in schools and the workplace.

The second category that was created was titled “Elections”, which ranged from September 10th, 2020, to January 8th, 2021, which was the day that Trump posted his final tweet before his account was initially suspended. During this time period, Trump transitioned his focus away from the Black Lives Matter protests and switched his attention to the 2020 presidential election. As the election neared, the vast majority of his tweets were centered around his policies and how they were going to save the US, while Biden (the Democratic Party nominee) was going to cause the literal destruction of the country. He also increased the frequency of false statements regarding the integrity of the election, which he frequently claimed was going to be rigged against him to ensure a Democratic presidency. Similar statements were made through his tweets until the election occurred on November 3rd, 2020, with Biden officially being declared the president-elect on November 7th, 2020. From this point forward, Trump’s tweets focused upon conspiracy theories of the election being rigged, calls for the results to be challenged, and about the lawsuits that his administration was filing in an attempt to overturn the election results, which ultimately culminated in the US Capitol building insurrection on January 6th, 2021.

Existing research has characterized Trump as an authoritarian, populist, and a neo-fascist. I originally chose to study these traits, as well as the trait of democratic governance, due to Trump being elected President of a democratic country. I had originally decided to break these traits down into 7-11 separate sub-categories⁸⁵ that were outlined in the literature as being descriptive and central aspects of each trait. The original direction of my thesis was to determine if Trump can be characterized as a neo-fascist with the aid of the three other studied traits

⁸⁵ The subcategories for *Democratic Governance* are: (1) Citizen Participation; (2) Protection in Place for Minorities and Pluralistic Opinion-Formation; (3) Civil Rights and Liberties; (4) Politically Elected Representatives; (5) Coordinated Actions Aimed at Resolving Public Problems; (6) The Rule of Law and Human Rights; and (7) Political Accountability.

The subcategories for *Authoritarianism* are: (1) Exclusionary; (2) Discrimination; (3) Scapegoating; (4) Ultra-Nationalist; (5) Serves Self-Interests over the Common Good; (6) Warmongering; (7) Global Social Order Dominated by Precarity, Fear, Anxiety, and Isolation; (8) Patriarchy and Militarism; and (9) The Fear of Social Degradation.

The subcategories for *Right-Wing Populism* are: (1) Nativist; (2) Attempts to Hijack State Apparatuses; (3) Attempts to Systematically Suppress Civil Society; (4) Hateful/Discriminatory Speech; (5) Anti-Establishment; (6) Corruption and Mass Clientelism; (7) Transforms Anxieties into Legitimate Apprehension and Fear; (8) Politico-Economic Isolationism; and (9) Demagoguery/Making Something Appeal to the People.

The subcategories for *Neo-Fascism* are: (1) Nativist; (2) Ultra-Nationalist; (3) Takes Advantage of Economic Crises; (4) Denial and Inversion Tactics; (5) Scapegoating; (6) Anti-Elitist; (7) Populist; (8) Anti-Democratic; (9) Encouragement of Violence; (10) Conforming Public and Institutional Opinion; and (11) Authoritarianism.

through the examination of Trump's tweets. However, the further I got into the analysis of the material, I realized that the traits began to overlap and conflate with each other. This was problematic as the traits were not useful as analytical tools and were suited better as a political tool and a useful device for political denunciation. As a result, I moved away from focusing on these traits and moved towards charismatic leadership and charismatic rhetoric. This allowed me to focus on the content of Trump's messaging and on how he communicated his messages.

Coding of the Data

When analyzing my data, I initially started by utilizing content analysis. Content analysis is concerned with creating predefined categories (Ezzy, 2002), which are sampled from an identified population for the research (Rice & Ezzy, 1999; as cited in Ezzy, 2002). Early in my coding, I initially decided upon two groups that I would separate the tweets based on when they were posted. The tweets were grouped into either the Civil Unrest or Elections categories. The population I drew from were Trump's direct tweets from his personal Twitter account during the aforementioned timeframe. I tallied every tweet during the assigned time period into the traits of Democratic Governance, Authoritarianism, Right-Wing Populism, and Neo-Fascism. I then tallied the number of tweets that fit into each trait, with there being 7 tweets that fit into Democratic Governance (0.16% of total tweets; 7 in Civil Unrest and 0 in Elections), 2463 with Authoritarianism (56.90% of total tweets; 1007 in Civil Unrest and 1456 in Elections), 1727 with Right-Wing Populism (39.89% of total tweets; 743 in Civil Unrest and 984 in Elections), and 986 with Neo-Fascism (22.78% of total tweets; 414 in Civil Unrest and 572 in Elections).

My original intention with the four concepts became problematic when I tried to apply them to the empirical material. The tweets were originally indicators of each original concept, but the material turned out not to be exclusive, so my classification system did not work. The characteristics of authoritarianism, populism, and neo-fascist still exist in my research but that was no longer the focus of the thesis. My research originally started with content analysis, but it shifted to thematic analysis as my research began to look at what Trump's leadership and rhetoric entails and how he broadcasted his messages. Thematic analysis is used to identify themes in the data that had not been predetermined prior to coding the research data (Ezzy, 2002). The shift in my research caused new themes to appear, as I was now looking at Trump's use of charismatic leadership and charismatic rhetoric and how they influenced his interactions with his supporters

over Twitter. The new themes of charismatic leadership and rhetoric presented me with a more focused, analytical perspective of Trump's tweets that was not available before. It allowed me to examine Trump's tweets in detail and describe the key events of the original time frame I was looking into, but it provided me with better insight into how his messages impacted his followers and what he was trying to accomplish.

My Relationship to the Topic

My personal relationship to the topic and my feelings towards Donald Trump did have an impact on my decision-making process in my research. My personal and political views and beliefs differ greatly from that of Trump as I am on the complete opposite side of the political aisle from Trump. The study of Donald Trump and his politics has been at the forefront of my personal and research interests ever since he announced his intention to run for President in the 2016 election. From the very beginning, Trump relied upon hateful, discriminatory, and volatile language to target people that he considered to be his enemies, to rally his supporters, and to separate the people that he liked or supported him from those he disliked and supported the opposition. My interest in this topic has persisted since then and I wanted to study this subject further as to understand the underlying aspects that influence one's decision to support people that preach intolerance and bigotry. As I conducted this research, I realized that my relationship to the topic and my values were going to play a role in how this thesis was going to be written. My interest in the topic had encouraged me to continue my studies on the study of Trump, but it stopped me from being able to take a neutral stance on the topic.

Chapter IV: Analysis

Introduction

Donald Trump was the 45th President of the United States and held office from January 2017-2021. Arguably the most controversial president in the history of the US, Trump's rhetoric was considered dangerous and detrimental to society by many, but he was also viewed as a savior by many others. In this chapter, I will discuss how Trump embodied the persona of a charismatic leader meant to save the US from destruction. As will be examined in this chapter, the content of his tweets and the function they served were as a communicative tool for Trump throughout his presidency. This was to broaden his reach to his supporters and to broadcast messages on a frequent basis that maintained confidence in Trump's mission. Trump's rhetoric was one of a demagogue, thus he utilized the fear and anxiety of his supporters to develop the narrative that he was the charismatic master that can save the US. He also used his stance as a political outsider to capitalize on the fear of his supporters by stating the US was in a perpetual state of crisis from the political elites and establishment, and that it would only continue and increase in seriousness if the Democratic Party were able to gain more power in congress and win the presidency. Through his boisterous use of Twitter and the media to reach his supporters, Trump was a distant charismatic leader that was able to mobilize his followers to stand firmly by his side in opposition to the supposedly dangerous Democratic Party as he offered a vision that was meaningful to his supporters. He actively stated his opinion on every matter that the US faced without a fear of consequences, and no matter how much social pressure he encountered, it was a rare occurrence to see him back down from anything he had previously said.

To better understand how Trump used charisma to communicate with his followers through his Twitter account, the first section will examine how Trump identified himself as the 'savior' of the US through his policies and who he considered to be a 'true American'. This first section explores Trump's reliance on fear and discriminatory practices through the use of ultra-nationalism and nativism, hateful speech, anti-establishment/elitism, isolationism, and patriarchy and militarism/encouragement of violence. The second section examines Trump's use of hyperboles to construct his scapegoating and fear tactics. As he exaggerated the US' and his own achievements, he also used denial/inversion tactics, as well as the development and promotion of conspiracy

theories/misinformation to create fear in his followers that they were being victimized by Trump's 'enemies'. The third section examines how Trump fought to undermine and destabilize democracy in the US by attacking democratic institutions to acquire as much power as possible. He blamed the political opposition for all problems that faced the US, as well as blaming the media, congress and the justice system, government departments that Trump thought of as non-loyal, and the electoral process. He also attacked politicians and 'othered' citizens that opposed him, including through the use of volatile and racist language. Finally, the fourth section examines Trump's use of populism to appeal to his supporters and how his leadership style constituted a neo-fascist rhetoric.

The Source of Trump's Charisma: Self-Presentation as the Savior of "America", its People and Their Values

Throughout his time as a businessman and in politics, Trump expressed a desire to be the center of attention and to be considered the most important person in the room. When he entered politics, he immediately made it clear that he perceived his ideas as being the only way forward for the US and that anybody who opposed his vision were his (and the US') enemies that must be quashed without hesitation. This worldview that he was presenting incorporated the promise of quick and easy solutions to the problems that the US was facing, and that all could be solved through the forceful suppression of the political opposition and people that he deemed to be 'others'. This worldview promoted a brand of nationalism (which Trump considered to be 'patriotism'), and that everybody who stood by him were considered to be 'real Americans'. He would use this 'patriotism' as a measuring stick of who he thought needed to be suppressed, as he viewed the 'others' to be 'unamerican' and that they were advocating for the downfall of the country.

Trump as the Protector of God

As a charismatic leader, Trump was playing the part of a master that was ordained by God to lead the country to prosperity. Trump's use of biblical imagery appeared in the form of implying that the US was a Christian country, 'blessed' solely by Christianity's God, and by attacking non-Christians. He placed himself in opposition of a supposedly 'godless' Democratic Party who were

going to take “God from the public square”⁸⁶ if Biden won the presidency. Trump also made false and misleading claims that “Two Democrat Caucus Meetings removed “UNDER GOD” from the Pledge of Allegiance... That’s where they’re coming from!”⁸⁷ to further develop the narrative that he was working to lead the US in a divine direction, while painting an apocalyptic image of a Democratic presidency.

Trump utilized God and Christianity as a method to further US exceptionalism, as he claimed that “America is the most Exceptional Nation on earth, and our destiny is blessed by God!”⁸⁸ Trump actively promoted Christianity while referring to other religions in derogatory manners. On All Souls Day (a day observed by Christianity on November 2nd), Trump tweeted that as Christians “let’s remember those who went before us and built this great nation. May their legacy inspire us as we keep our nation what it has always been: blessed and great!”⁸⁹ There is an implication present in this tweet that it was solely the work of Christians for any success achieved by the US, which in turn is problematic as it ignores the history of racism, persecution, and genocide committed against non-Christians, along with the current reality that people of different religions face in the US.

Trump as a Political Outsider

Trump has proudly expressed the fact that he is not a politician and that he is a political outsider. He presented himself as “the candidate of farmers, factory workers, police officers, and

⁸⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1316822302533668864?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1316822302533668864%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

⁸⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1297521970813317121?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1297521970813317121%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

⁸⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1304998365676015621?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1304998365676015621%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

⁸⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1323387597796900866?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1323387597796900866%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

hard-working, law-abiding patriots of every race, religion and creed!”⁹⁰ Trump has very limited experience in politics, but his supporters appeared to back this sentiment by believing that Trump was a relatable candidate that would represent their interests against a corrupt political establishment. Trump exemplified this sentiment by stating:

If I don’t sound like a typical Washington politician, it’s because I’m NOT a politician. If I don’t always play by the rules of the Washington Establishment, it’s because I was elected to fight for YOU, harder than anyone ever has before!⁹¹

Trump actively tried to separate himself from the political establishment and the ‘elites’, which he related to Biden to try and further himself from the political opposition. He considered Biden to be “the living embodiment of the corrupt political class that enriched itself while draining the economic life and soul from our Country”,⁹² and that the political establishment was doing everything in its power to stop him. Trump stated that:

The Depraved Swamp have been trying to stop me – because they know I don’t answer to THEM – I answer only to YOU. Together, we will defeat the corrupt establishment, we will DETHRONE the failed political class, we will drain the Washington Swamp & we will SAVE THE AMERICAN DREAM!⁹³

By focusing on being a political outsider, Trump attempted to separate himself from the rest of the politicians that were in congress. By being a political outsider, he worked to distance himself from the political elites and establishment, and supported the position of bringing a new perspective to the US, unlike that of a traditional politician. He positioned himself as the sole line of defense that

⁹⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1323030938952060928?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1323030938952060928%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df1f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

⁹¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1323376918620758022?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1323376918620758022%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

⁹²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1317652894678609921?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1317652894678609921%7Ctwgr%5E07c826a1562b7bce6e02433628527a18010554a%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-07225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22thelivingembodimentofthecorruptpoliticalclassthatenricheditselfwhiledrainingtheeconomiclifeandsoulfromourCountry.22

⁹³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1323340413579726848?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1323340413579726848%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

existed between a prosperous country and a destructive and corrupt Democratic presidency, exemplified by him stating “I am the only thing in the Radical Left’s way!”⁹⁴ in response to actor James Wood’s tweet calling former Democratic News York City mayor Bill De Blasio “a criminal” and “an anti-Semite thug piece of shit”.⁹⁵ By positioning himself in such a way, Trump focused on building a connection between the Democratic Party and the ‘corrupt’ political class and establishment that had failed the US and its citizens.

Trump as a Strongman

Trump identified as a strongman, which is a desire for military might and dominance. Trump romanticized the idea of the US having the “STRONGEST EVER MILITARY”,⁹⁶ which became an important campaign tool for him as he claimed that he had “rebuilt the awesome power of the U.S. Military”.⁹⁷ Trump’s warmongering had pushed the US to the brink of war on several occasions with North Korea and Iran, as he had been vocal about his intentions to use military force against those countries if tensions increased or attacks were committed against US military personnel. For example, Trump tweeted that “According to press reports, Iran may be planning an assassination, or other attack, against the United States in retaliation for the killing of terrorist leader Soleimani”,⁹⁸ and then issued a warning to Iran over Twitter that “Any attack by Iran, in any form, against the United States will be met with an attack on Iran that will be 1,000 times greater in magnitude!”⁹⁹ after the US launched an airstrike that killed Qasem Soleimani, who was

⁹⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1313839449588072449?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1313839449588072449%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Cwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

⁹⁵ <https://twitter.com/RealJamesWoods/status/1313625009080811520>

⁹⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1313068701176999941?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1313068701176999941%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Cwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

⁹⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1311498845860196355?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1311498845860196355%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Cwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

⁹⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1305704032988622848?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1305704032988622848%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Cwcon%5Es2&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

⁹⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1305704032988622848?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1305704032988622848%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Cwcon%5Es2&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

a leader within the Iranian military and was considered to be the second most powerful individual in Iran. Trump's statements regarding a potential conflict launched the world into a state of panic, as the fear of a potential war was at the forefront of people's minds. No diplomatic measures were taken or suggested, as proving the power of the US military was an important tactic of Trump's promotion of American exceptionalism on the international stage.

A reoccurring sentiment during this period of Trump's presidency was "LAW & ORDER".¹⁰⁰ Trump promoted the idea that he was supportive of law enforcement, and that he was in favor of "more money for Law Enforcement!".¹⁰¹ These sentiments were expressed once the Black Lives Matter protests started in the summer of 2020, where occasional acts of violence occurred during the protests. Trump utilized these sporadic acts of violence to demonize all protesters and proclaimed the Republican Party as "the party of LAW AND ORDER!",¹⁰² while characterizing the Democratic Party as a party of lawlessness and violence by claiming that "Biden stands with the rioters & looters".¹⁰³ He ordered the suppression of the protests through violent means and promoted the use of militarism to deter furthering protesting while claiming that all of the unrest existed exclusively in Democrat-run cities and states. He demanded that cities allowing these protests to occur work with the federal government so that the national guard could be deployed in those areas. He promoted the values of being 'pro-order' by stating that "The only way you will stop the violence in the high crime Democrat run cities is through strength!"¹⁰⁴ and

[con%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Results%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22](https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?F%3Results%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22)

¹⁰⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1311310383781679107?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1311310383781679107%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Results%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁰¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1268686977320263681?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1268686977320263681%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Results%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁰²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1274537451436994561?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1274537451436994561%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Results%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁰³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1322293755328618497?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1322293755328618497%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Results%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁰⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1300171130326716418?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1300171130326716418%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7C

that “I stand with the HEROES of law enforcement”.¹⁰⁵ Trump’s support for policing and being pro-order was not utilized however to protect all US citizens, but only to serve his political ambitions. He actively denied the existence of systemic discrimination, including after the murder of George Floyd by a white police officer. He violently sought to suppress movements with law enforcement and security personnel as they were a perceived threat to his rule but was quick to turn on law enforcement when they impeded his goals. Despite his claims of supporting law enforcement, he was largely responsible for the incitement of the January 6th Capitol insurrection, which resulted in the physical assaults of several police officers by his supporters who disobeyed law enforcement’s orders when they stormed the Capitol building.

Trump’s Promotion of Ultra-Nationalist Patriotism

Trump lauded his supporters as “loyal, hardworking American Patriots”¹⁰⁶ while referring to Biden as “the candidate of rioters, looters, arsonists, gun-grabbers, flag-burners, Marxists, lobbyists, and special interests” (see Footnote 90) as he described his supporters as dangerous individuals that would destroy the country.

He decried that social institutions such as public schools, universities and government workplaces had become places of “Radical Left Indoctrination, not Education”¹⁰⁷ that were promoting “poisonous anti-American lies”¹⁰⁸ to children. As a result, he promised to “restore

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¹⁰⁵https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1322293755328618497?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1322293755328618497%7Ctwgr%5E0a96862d9c6a0b526b07ddd8612b417f9ee0dff%7Cwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-20222C222023-09-18225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22salary22

¹⁰⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1308222067175690240?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1308222067175690240%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Cwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹⁰⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1281616586273468416?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1281616586273468416%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Cwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹⁰⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1306797270445166594?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1306797270445166594%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Cwcon%5Es2 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

PATRIOTIC EDUCATION to our schools”¹⁰⁹ as he claimed that children must be taught “to love our Country, honor our history, and always respect our great American Flag”.¹¹⁰

The national anthem and the US flag were predominant symbols of patriotism for Trump, and he regularly attacked and called individuals “Anti-American”¹¹¹ that he believed were insulting these symbols. During the Black Lives Matter protests, it became an increasingly common form of protest to kneel during the national anthem in opposition to police brutality, systemic racism and discrimination. It made headlines as athletes across many North American sports leagues knelt during the national anthem, which prompted Trump to degrade these sports leagues and claim that it is “a sign of great disrespect for our Country”.¹¹² Trump’s tactics and suppression of racial justice protests during the Summer of 2020 boiled over into acts of unrest where monuments, memorials and statues of individuals associated with racism and colonization were vandalized or destroyed to showcase the problematic nature of the glorification of racist historical figures in US history.

Trump’s claims of patriotism were also utilized as a tactic to promote an important mission of his presidency, which was to maintain power by any means necessary. As the 2020 election neared, he defended supporters that threatened and harassed Biden campaign staffers by stating that “In my opinion, these patriots did nothing wrong”.¹¹³ Patriotism was also used by Trump to justify his calls to overturn the 2020 election results as he claimed that he was putting “America

¹⁰⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1322652327367507968?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1322652327367507968%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

¹¹⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1323425512933523456?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1323425512933523456%7Ctwgr%5E0a96862d9c6a0b526b07ddd8612b417f9ee0dff%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-20222C222023-09-18225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22salary22

¹¹¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1321190293174059008?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1321190293174059008%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹¹²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1285520982648729600?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1285520982648729600%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹¹³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1323072051402350592?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1323072051402350592%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-20222C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

First” because states that voted for Biden were riddled with voter and election fraud.¹¹⁴ During the January 6th insurrection on the US Capitol, Trump reluctantly called for his supporters to be peaceful despite also stating that:

These are the things and events that happen when a **sacred** landslide election victory is so unceremoniously & viciously stripped away from great patriots who have been badly & unfairly treated for so long. Go home with love & in peace. Remember this day forever!¹¹⁵

Trump’s idea of a US patriot was granted solely to those who offered him their undivided loyalty and to his mission of ‘Mak(ing) America Great Again’. He utilized the ploy of patriotism as a tool to demonize the political opposition, and justify his attempts to overturn the election results and undemocratically remain president. Once the election was called and Biden was declared the president-elect, Trump doubled down on discredited claims that there was widespread voter fraud committed in a conspiracy to get Trump out of the White House. He reiterated this stance when he tweeted “The 75,000,000 great American Patriots who voted for me, AMERICA FIRST, and MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN, will have a GIANT VOICE long into the future. They will not be disrespected or treated unfairly in any way, shape or form!!!”¹¹⁶ two days after the insurrection. He used his two popular slogans “America First” and “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) as a calling card to his supporters as he continued to maintain his status as a charismatic leader amongst a vast amount of the US population. Trump gave the impression that similar incidents are possible when he stated that his supporters will not be disrespected or unfairly treated, implying that they may again rely on undemocratic measures to achieve their goals if they feel that their views are threatened.

¹¹⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1324386685858287616?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1324386685858287616%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹¹⁵ This specific tweet was deleted from Trump’s Twitter account after it was posted. A copy of the tweet can still be seen in it’s entirety on the Trump Twitter Archive V2 website:

<https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222020-05-20%22%2C%222023-11-10%22%5D&searchbox=%22These+are+the+things+and+events+that+happen+%22>

¹¹⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1347555316863553542?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1347555316863553542%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-20222C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

Trump’s Ultra-Nationalist, Xenophobic, and Anti-Immigrant Values

Much of Trump’s campaigns and his presidency were fueled by racism and discrimination against religious and racial minorities in the US. Trump is a denier of systemic discrimination and opposed protections to ensure safety based on personal characteristics of individuals. Trump based his denial of racial and gender oppression on what he called “divisive and harmful sex and race-based ideologies”,¹¹⁷ which is based upon protections that are meant to bring attention to discriminatory practices, such as the implementation and importance of discrimination and sensitivity training in the workplace. Similar to the claims he made about the education system, Trump stated that there were “efforts to indoctrinate government employees” (see Footnote 117) and that he was taking measures to expand his ban of this education and training to “to people and companies that do business...” (see Footnote 117) “...with our Country, the United States Military, Government Contractors, and Grantees”.¹¹⁸ As well, Trump specifically targeted the supposed use of ‘Critical Race Theory’ that was claimed to be taught in the workplace, which had been a central political tactic by the Republicans at the time in their fight against the “indoctrination” happening in schools and at work. Trump supported the “Purge of ‘Critical Race Theory’ from Federal Agencies”,¹¹⁹ while claiming that it is “a sickness that cannot be allowed to continue. Please report any sightings so we can quickly extinguish!” (see Footnote 119). The denial of racial and gender oppression was common and fraught with fear and misinformation to attract likeminded voters. He advocated for strict pride in the US and its history by denying negative aspects of its past and present, made clear by saying “Americans should be taught to take PRIDE in our Great Country, and if you don’t, there’s nothing in it for you!” (see Footnote 118).

¹¹⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1308539918075883523?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1308539918075883523%7Ctwtgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

¹¹⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1308539921829781504?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1308539921829781504%7Ctwtgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

¹¹⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1302212909808971776?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1302212909808971776%7Ctwtgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

Trump had also exhibited an explicit xenophobic and anti-immigrant stance during his presidential campaigns and his presidency. On the day in 2015 that he announced his candidacy for the presidency, Trump (2015) stated during his very first campaign speech that:

“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best ... They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists ... I would build a great wall...” (para. 9; as cited in Keck & Clua-Losada, 2021, p. 611).

Trump would say afterwards that he assumed some of the people from Mexico are good people, but his perspective was already made clear. This continued through the lead-up to the 2020 presidential election, as Trump promoted the values of being “Strong on Crime & Borders”¹²⁰ in the candidates that he endorsed (such as Michelle Fischbach, Dusty Johnson¹²¹ and Lynda Bennett).¹²² This is important as Trump would also occasionally include “immigration” and “crime” in the same phrase of an endorsement, such as stating “He is Tough on Immigration and Crime”¹²³ in his endorsement of Jim Bogner. This was done to distance himself as much as possible from former president Barack Obama and Biden (Obama’s vice-president), who Trump claimed had “failed immigration policies”.¹²⁴

The US-Mexico border was a clear aspect of Trump’s presidential campaigns and his presidency. He actively touted the idea that the US had achieved the most secure border in its

¹²⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1307052013474263045?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1307052013474263045%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-2222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹²¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1267809888383705088?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1267809888383705088%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-2222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹²²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1273038952275095558?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1273038952275095558%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-2222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹²³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1304166675902758918?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1304166675902758918%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-2222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹²⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1319710299419623424?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1319710299419623424%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

history during his presidency through his tough on crime approach to immigration. He would regularly claim that the Democrats want “people to just flow in” through “very dangerous open borders”¹²⁵ which would result in many criminals entering the US.¹²⁶ He claimed that if Biden was to win the presidency, then the US’ borders would be completely eliminated “by implementing nationwide catch-and-release” and that Biden would turn every community “into a Sanctuary City for violent criminals”.¹²⁷ During his presidency, Trump endorsed candidates that promised to support the building of a wall along the US-Mexico border,¹²⁸ be “strong” on national security,¹²⁹ and support a secure border.¹³⁰

Throughout Trump’s presidency, he actively promoted an “America First agenda”¹³¹ which was a demonstration of his ultra-nationalist, nativist, and demagogic political tactics. The “America First” slogan was utilized in an attempt to attack specific countries and political opponents that he claimed were operating in opposition to US values. These sentiments can be felt through Trump’s travel ban to several predominantly Muslim countries, which Trump claimed,

¹²⁵https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1280320684204404737?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1280320684204404737%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹²⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1282281745585504265?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1282281745585504265%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹²⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1321233544346095616?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1321233544346095616%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹²⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1279161110336278531?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1279161110336278531%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹²⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1307052141496930304?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1307052141496930304%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹³⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1319017749931319297?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1319017749931319297%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

¹³¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1289734560863854593?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1289734560863854593%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-22222C222023-09-20225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22americafirstagenda22

“successfully keeps very bad and dangerous people out of our great Country”.¹³² He also stated that his immigration policies are stopping “terrorists, jihadists, and violent extremists”,¹³³ and that he was “protecting your families and keeping Radical Islamic Terrorists OUT of our Country!”,¹³⁴ as “Joe Biden would increase refugees from terrorist nations by 700%. His plan would overwhelm your communities and turn Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin and the entire Midwest into a refugee camp” (see Footnote 134). Trump had proudly boasted about his policies that were in place to curtail immigration through the justification that he was protecting the US from dangerous individuals, and he openly targeted specific religions as being a root cause of this supposed violence.

Trump’s Isolationism

Trump’s attacks on people from outside the US extended to entire countries as well, as he promoted the idea that the US must rely completely on itself, even at the expense of international partners and allies. He isolated the US from other countries, both from an economic standpoint but also when there was a crisis. These practices can cause citizens to feel alone and isolated, and that they were fighting for the soul of the country as it was at risk of being destroyed.

For example, despite the desire from the majority of citizens to get their soldiers out of war zones, once the soldiers are so entrenched in the dealings of a country, the withdrawal must be carefully planned and executed to ensure that the country can properly handle said withdrawal. In the case of Afghanistan, Trump brokered a deal with the Taliban so that all US military personnel could be withdrawn from the country. This deal was made in February 2020, with Trump stating in May 2020 that the US is:

¹³²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1286990480102825984?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1286990480102825984%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

¹³³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1322333352205021184?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1322333352205021184%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

¹³⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1323424836077670400?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1323424836077670400%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

acting as a police force, not the fighting force that we are, in Afghanistan. After 19 years, it is time for them to police their own Country. Bring our soldiers back home but closely watch what is going on and strike with a thunder like never before, if necessary!¹³⁵

Trump's idea of peace for the US resulted in the take over of Afghanistan by the Taliban, as violence increased on their way to seizing control of the country in August 2021. Trump's actions ultimately resulted in the dangerous withdrawal of the military from the country, leaving citizens and an ill-equipped military in Afghanistan to fend for themselves without ensuring that proper safety measures were taken so they would not be subjected to violence from the Taliban.

Trump also desired to cut other countries off from economic and trade dealings with the US through sanctions and other punitive measures. Although many countries were subjected to Trump's economic isolationism, he put a particular focus on China, whom he pictured as the biggest threat to the US' manufacturing dominance. Trump promoted these views by stating that "the U.S. certainly does maintain a policy option, under various conditions, of a complete decoupling from China".¹³⁶ During his presidency, he wanted to begin a transition where countries would rely on the US for their goods, and stated that "Over the next 4 years, we will make America into the Manufacturing Superpower of the World & end our reliance on China".¹³⁷ While harming relationships with allies, there was an intention by the US to break off mutual aid so to benefit themselves to the greatest extent, even at the expense of others.

Trump's isolationist values put the US at odds with much of the world, including at the risk of ruining important relationships with allies. There was no desire to help others who face the threat of violence at their doorstep, and there was a promotion of economic isolation by working towards sustaining themselves and harming those around them. There was little regard for the

¹³⁵https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1265612405784162304?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1265612405784162304%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹³⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1273706102023237633?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1273706102023237633%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹³⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1322687937570635777?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1322687937570635777%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

suffering of others that could result from the US' actions or the actions of others, which played well into Trump's nationalist slogan of 'America First'.

Charismatic Rhetoric: Producing, Promoting and Embellishing Counter Narratives

Fear was the central aspect of Trump's presidency and his presidential campaigns. Everything Trump said and did during his presidency revolved around the demonization of the opposition and making citizens fearful of a Democratic Party presidency. He used scapegoating tactics to blame the political opposition and certain groups of citizens as being responsible for every issue that the US was facing and would similarly use denial and inversion tactics to push the blame away from himself and onto the opposition. He regularly created and promoted misinformation to either attack his opponents or convince them to support his point of view, even if the views that he was promoting are factually incorrect or dangerous (such as during the Covid-19 pandemic, where he spread misinformation about treatments and the severity of the virus). Another key tactic that Trump used to appeal to his followers was the use of hyperboles, where he inflated aspects of what he thought was great or poor about the US to try and obtain as much support as possible. He used this tactic as a means of exaggerating how the US would fair during a Democratic presidency, and to convince supporters that he was the sole person qualified to be the president. The use of repetition and metaphors were crucial for Trump when utilizing fear and they were prominent in Trump's tweets, such as when he was attacking the political opposition, the establishment, and citizens that were not supportive of him (such as Black Lives Matter protesters).

Utilizing Scapegoating and Fear Mongering Tactics

Trump actively developed a narrative of perceived threats outside of the US that were trying to bring down the US economy and cause physical harm to its citizens. One of his targets was China, as Trump tried to link Biden to China by claiming that he would destroy the US by sending jobs overseas, such as saying that "Biden can never negotiate with China. They would own the U.S. if he were ever President!".¹³⁸ Aside from perceived international economic threats,

¹³⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1323330770199408640?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwettermbed%7Ctwterm%5E1323330770199408640%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctw

Trump discriminated against and scapegoated individuals from countries south of the US-Mexico border by stating that they are bringing drugs, crime, and violence to the US. Trump blamed the Democrats for allowing this supposed violence to occur, as he claimed that “Every corrupt force in American life that betrayed you and hurt your are supporting Joe Biden:... The open borders lobbyists...”¹³⁹ “...that killed our fellow citizens with illegal drugs, gangs & crime”.¹⁴⁰ To protect against this supposed violence, Trump had proposed the construction of a wall along the US-Mexico border. He had gathered enough support in congress to begin the construction and claimed on Twitter that “I built the Wall (security)”.¹⁴¹ His language espoused an ultra-nationalist and xenophobic sentiment, as he stated that “As the Wall goes up, illegal crossings go down”.¹⁴² This highlighted Trump’s views on the necessity for strict and discriminatory measures to combat migrants from crossing the border. This was used as a campaign tactic, as he claimed that “Joe Biden and the Democrat Socialists will... dissolve your borders, release criminal aliens”,¹⁴³ and that ““Joe Biden spent the last 47 years... opening your borders””.¹⁴⁴ Trump stated that without his border policies, many violent criminals would enter the US, which would supposedly occur if Biden won the presidency. Despite all evidence to the contrary, undocumented immigrants do not

[con%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22](https://www.thetrumparchive.com/2F3Results%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22)

¹³⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1323330590867861505?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1323330597813735425%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es2 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

¹⁴⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1323330597813735425?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1323330597813735425%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

¹⁴¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1309453320264790021?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1309453320264790021%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

¹⁴²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1288966119676616704?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1288966119676616704%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁴³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1316822302533668864?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1316822302533668864%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁴⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1322252815561973760?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1322252815561973760%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

increase the rates of violent crime in the US, but Trump promoted an anti-immigration rhetoric throughout the entirety of his presidency. The border wall was a symbolic gesture that represented the desire to keep migrants out of the country and let them know that they are unwelcome, which became one of Trump's proudest initiatives during his presidency. Trump expressed a desire for migrants to be limited or blocked entirely from entering the US, especially if they are from specific countries or areas of the world, such as south of the US-Mexico border or from predominantly Muslim countries, which was the basis for Trump's travel ban.

Within the US borders, Trump continued to develop the narrative of the 'other' as he targeted the political opposition and their supporters as being detrimental to the US and its citizens, as can be exemplified by stating that "The far-left Democrats that ruined our public schools, depleted our inner cities, defunded our police, & demeaned your sacred faith & values; The Anti-American radicals defaming..." (see Footnote 140) "...our noble history, heritage & heroes; and ANTIFA, the rioters, looters, Marxists, & left-wing extremists. THEY ALL SUPPORT JOE BIDEN!".¹⁴⁵ Trump would place blame for all issues that the US was facing on people that opposed him politically, or anybody that he viewed as a threat to his vision for the US. He also placed sole blame for any difficulties that the US was facing on the Democratic Party and their supporters, including through the fabrication of false, perceived threats without evidence. For example, Trump claimed that "If the Radical Left Democrats assume power, your Second Amendment, Right to Life, Secure Borders, and..."¹⁴⁶ "...Religious Liberty, among many other things, are OVER and GONE!".¹⁴⁷ He made his point clear about Democrats being in charge of government departments by stating "If Joe Biden is elected, far-left lunatics won't just be running failed Dem Cities—they

¹⁴⁵https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1323330601953431554?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Cwterm%5E1323330601953431554%7Ctwgr%5Ed37864628db8260da8f3c6d266a4c94e9835d1fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222020-11-03225D

¹⁴⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1273665328514555904?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Cwterm%5E1273665328514555904%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

¹⁴⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1273665329416286219?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Cwterm%5E1273665329416286219%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

will be running the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Supreme Court”¹⁴⁸ meaning that nothing would be accomplished during a Biden presidency.

Secondly, Trump’s attacks on Democratic supporters utilized fear to terrify citizens about their personal well-being, such as during the Black Lives Matter protests, where Trump claimed that “If I don’t win, America’s Suburbs will be OVERRUN with Low Income Projects, Anarchists, Agitators, Looters and, of course, “Friendly Protesters””.¹⁴⁹ Trump did not acknowledge any reasons as to why the protests occurred, or the systemic discrimination and violence in US society that lead to incidents of police brutality. Trump largely exaggerated the amount of unrest that occurred during the protests, and although there were incidents of unrest, the vast majority of protests were peaceful. Trump challenged the protesters by linking every protester to the unrest, by claiming that “They are not “peaceful protesters”, as Sleepy Joe and the Democrats call them, they are THUGS””.¹⁵⁰ Trump asserted that the protests were responsible for rampant crime, as he blamed the Democrats completely for this supposed violence, such as by stating that “Democrats and Biden didn’t even mention the Anarchists, Agitators, Looters and so called “Peaceful Protesters” at their Convention. They will allow rampant crime, just as they do in Portland””.¹⁵¹ As a method of creating fear amongst his supporters, he scapegoated peaceful protesters due to sporadic and isolated instances of unrest. Trump had stoked fear into his supporters that the destruction of the US was all but guaranteed if Biden won the presidency, both through structural means like government policies, but as well as the physical destruction of the country by the supporters.

¹⁴⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1304237564203679745?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1304237564203679745%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

¹⁴⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1304060630656311296?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1304060630656311296%7Ctwgr%5E8368c16bc73a7f28cf3a6c90ce29ed21dd5feaf3%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-11225Dsearchbox%3D22Overthenextfouryears2Cwewillstoptheradicalindoctrination22

¹⁵⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1303371151792513024?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1303371151792513024%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-20222C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

¹⁵¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1299124203552210951?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1299124203552210951%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-20222C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

Lastly, for the final example, Trump blamed low-income housing for crime in the suburbs, claiming that they were going to be detrimental to the safety of women and that they were ruining the “American Dream”. He claimed that:

Suburban women are flocking over to us. They realize that I am saving the Suburbs – the American Dream! I terminated the Regulation that would bring projects and crime to Suburbia. Not on my watch! Biden will bring the Regulation back, but bigger and worse.¹⁵²

As evidenced by his tweet, Trump wanted to eliminate regulations that would allow the building of low-income housing in suburban areas, while claiming that Biden would keep these regulations and that it would destroy the prospect of the “American Dream” for living in an upper-class, safe neighborhood. Trump demonized low-income individuals and advocated for the separation of the wealthy from people of lower-socioeconomic status. Trump built upon the concept of fear by making wealthy individuals (especially women) feel unsafe in their homes, and that if these regulations were not repealed, then they were at risk of being targeted by supposedly violent criminals.

Denial and Inversion Tactics

Trump actively used denial and inversion tactics throughout his presidency to take attention away from potential or confirmed wrongdoing on his part. He would achieve this through the repeated denial of facts and information or by deflecting attention onto his political opponents by attempting to make it appear that they were the ones who were truly committing heinous acts instead of him. For example, when the media reported that Trump had called US soldiers who died in battle “suckers” and “losers”, Trump went on the defensive by posting a video on Twitter that said “These are my real words about our GREAT HEROES, not made up lies by the enemy. THANK YOU and God Bless You All!”¹⁵³ He used this moment to attack The Atlantic magazine (the publisher of the story) by claiming that “The Atlantic Magazine is dying, like most magazines,

¹⁵²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1319300515478622218?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1319300515478622218%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5E1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

¹⁵³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1303835269343346688?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1303835269343346688%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5E1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

so they make up a fake story in order to gain some relevance”,¹⁵⁴ and simply chalk it up to being another attack on him made by the Fake News. Trump’s denial of reported or confirmed acts committed by him played a crucial role in his presidency, as there was no accountability taken on his part for wrongdoings. He presented himself as an individual that was incapable of doing wrong and that any attacks on him or his character were simply slander by those that opposed him.

Also, the use of inversion tactics to deflect away from negative attention played an equally important role in Trump’s presidency. When Trump was faced with an obstacle, he would turn attention away from it to either slander his political opponents or praise himself. A prominent example of this is when a report surfaced of Russia placing bounties on US soldiers, but Trump used inversion to switch focus onto Obama, Biden, the media, and the Russia collusion investigation by saying:

Nobody briefed or told me, @VP Pence, or Chief of Staff @MarkMeadows about the so-called attacks on our troops in Afghanistan by Russians, as reported through an “anonymous source” by the Fake News @nytimes. Everybody is denying it & there have not been many attacks on us.....¹⁵⁵ ...Nobody’s been tougher on Russia than the Trump Administration. With Corrupt Joe Biden & Obama, Russia had a field day, taking over important parts of Ukraine – Where’s Hunter? Probably just another phony Times hit job, just like their failed Russia Hoax. Who is their “source”?¹⁵⁶

By utilizing inversion tactics, he distracted his supporters and attempted to do the same with the rest of the US by bringing attention to the supposed wrongdoing of his rivals through praising himself on initiatives he had taken or claiming that he was the best politician to lead the US, therefore meaning that it did not matter if he did something wrong. This was also evident when Trump was attempting to overturn the 2020 election results, where he blamed the rest of the

¹⁵⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1301893907295371266?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1301893907295371266%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

¹⁵⁵https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1277202159109537793?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1277202159109537793%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

¹⁵⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1277202162070753280?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1277202162070753280%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

Republican Party leadership for him not getting the results he wanted by stating “Our leaders (not me, of course!) are pathetic. They only know how to lose!”¹⁵⁷ These tactics were meant to persuade public opinion away from negative coverage of his actions and increase his appeal with his supporters. Those that he considered to be enemies were solely to blame for problems that the country faced, and their supposed injustices were always considered to be worse than anything Trump had done or could possibly do.

Creating Disinformation and Conspiracy Theories

The production of false information was a daily practice by Trump during his presidency, and he developed and promoted conspiracy theories as a strategic move to further his political ambition. As the conservative ideology holds firm values regarding how society should function, Trump would utilize these values to push dangerous information to ensure that conservative voters would support his presidency. An example of this is the disinformation and conspiracy theories that Trump pushed regarding the Covid-19 pandemic. Trump actively downplayed the severity of the virus as he showcased a desire to have all citizens return to their normal lives as soon as possible despite the consequences of being exposed to the virus. This sentiment was showcased when he tweeted:

Now that we have witnessed it on a largescale basis, and firsthand, Virtual Learning has proven to be TERRIBLE compared to In School, or On Campus, Learning. Not even close! Schools must be open in the Fall. If not open, why would the Federal Government give Funding? It won't!!!¹⁵⁸

Trump had also stated that working in the office “Will always be better than working from home!”¹⁵⁹ despite there being no vaccine available at that time to combat the virus and wearing a

¹⁵⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1343919653068943361?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1343919653068943361%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

¹⁵⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1281554061972692994?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1281554061972692994%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

¹⁵⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1304362313743560704?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1304362313743560704%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

face mask was still an important method of limiting spread of the virus when out in public. He also promoted the false narrative that the drug hydroxychloroquine was an effective tool that would help fight the virus. He referred to a study from Henry Ford Health System on Twitter by saying “The highly respected Henry Ford Health System just reported, based on a large sampling, that HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE cut the death rate in certain sick patients very significantly”,¹⁶⁰ as the study concluded that “...of 2,541 patients hospitalized between March 10 and May 2, 2020 across the system’s six hospitals, the study found 13% of those treated with hydroxychloroquine alone died compared to 26.4% not treated with hydroxychloroquine.” @HenryFordNews”.¹⁶¹ Despite this study’s results, the use of hydroxychloroquine for the treatment of Covid-19 was repeatedly debunked by health organizations across the world as there were little to no reported benefits of treating people with the Covid-19 virus with hydroxychloroquine. These same organizations also attributed the use of hydroxychloroquine to other health problems, but Trump had promoted the use of this drug, nonetheless.

Trump furthered his use of misinformation and conspiracies through his ruthless campaign to prevent mail-in voting in the 2020 presidential election and during his attempts at overturning the election results. He claimed that “The United States cannot have all Mail In Ballots. It will be the greatest Rigged Election in history. People grab them from mailboxes, print thousands of forgeries and “force” people to sign. Also, forge names. Some absentee OK, when necessary”.¹⁶² He made many comments in the same vein, as he repeatedly suggested that the election was going to be rigged against the Republicans because of mail-in voting, even though there was no evidence to support his claims. He continued these conspiracies until the 2020 election and after, where he baselessly claimed that “the 2020 Election was RIGGED, and that I WON!”¹⁶³ Mail-in voting was

¹⁶⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1280328830218051584?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1280328830218051584%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

¹⁶¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1280209143975084032?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1280209143975084032%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

¹⁶²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1264558926021959680?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1264558926021959680%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

¹⁶³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1332169753004224515?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1332169753004224515%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

deemed a safe method of voting, and there was no evidence of the voter fraud that Trump was claiming, including from Trump's own administration and his attorney general, William Barr.

The use of false information resulted in the deaths of many citizens who defied scientific knowledge and refused to support Covid-19 health measures unless Trump said so. False information also culminated in the US Capitol insurrection as Trump refused to acknowledge the results of the election, despite his claims of voter fraud being officially debunked and labeled as disinformation. Trump's embrace of conspiracy theories and misinformation played a central role in his presidency as he utilized it to play upon his supporter's fears that the Democratic Party would lead to the destruction of the US. He promoted debunked and unfounded claims to further support his political ambitions, which ultimately relied on his desire to hold power. His use of misinformation set a dangerous precedent in the US, as Trump and his supporters began to openly question any policies or opinions that did not support their worldview. They actively defied information and orders that was not supported by Trump, even if what they supported were proven to be untrue.

Exaggerating his Personal and Presidential Achievements

Trump benefitted greatly from embellishing and inflating how great the US was doing with him as president, as he used exaggerative language to describe himself and the political opposition. Leading up to the 2020 election, he utilized his nationalist and charismatic rhetoric to claim that "America is the most Exceptional Nation on earth, and our destiny is blessed by God!"¹⁶⁴ and praised himself by stating that his administration "accomplished more than any Administration in first 3 ½ years."¹⁶⁵ He regularly claimed that the US could only thrive under his leadership, which continued to build upon the US' partisan divide by claiming before the election that "Your VOTE on Tuesday, November 3rd is going to SAVE OUR COUNTRY. We are going to defeat the

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¹⁶⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1304998365676015621?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1304998365676015621%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com/%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁶⁵https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1290956691488612358?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1290956691488612358%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeea425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com/%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

Marxists, Socialists, Rioters, Flag-Burners, and Left-wing Extremists!”¹⁶⁶ He stated that “The Radical Left Democrats, who totally control Biden, will destroy our Country as we know it. Unimaginably bad things would happen to America.”¹⁶⁷ Trump further developed the sentiments of impending doom that would supposedly result if Biden won the presidency by creating an image of the worst possible scenario for the US if Trump was no longer the president. There was an evident promotion of Trump considering himself and his administration to be the saviors that the US needed, and that it would not be possible to replicate the supposed accomplishments that his administration achieved.

Trump also used aggrandizing language to promote his personal and professional achievements, which was an important tactic to attract voters because they perceived Trump as a successful businessperson and a political outsider that could speak for them. Trump’s boasting of his personal achievements as a businessperson was intermingled with his actions as president, and he did not shy away from mentioning them. There was a focus on Trump’s taxes during his presidency, and although he promised to release his tax returns, he never did. When the topic resurfaced, Trump stated that:

The Fake News Media, just like Election time 2016, is bringing up my Taxes & all sorts of other nonsense with illegally obtained information & only bad intent. I paid many millions of dollars in taxes but was entitled, like everyone else, to depreciation & tax credits.....¹⁶⁸Also, if you look at the extraordinary assets owned by me, which the Fake News hasn’t, I am extremely under leveraged – I have very little debt compared to the value of assets. Much of this information is already on file, but I have long said that I may release....¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1321903377379287040?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1321903377379287040%7Ctwgr%5E70094bf5ea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁶⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1284894845614600194?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1284894845614600194%7Ctwgr%5E70094bf5ea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁶⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1310587468731879431?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1310587468731879431%7Ctwgr%5E70094bf5ea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁶⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1310587470090731520?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1310587471231582208%7Ctwgr%5E70094bf5ea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es2_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

.....Financial Statements, from the time I announced I was going to run for President, showing all properties, assets and debts. It is a very IMPRESSIVE Statement, and also shows that I am the only President on record to give up my yearly \$400,000 plus Presidential Salary!¹⁷⁰

Trump utilized his personal wealth accumulated from his businesses as a method to attack his enemies and as a tool to help his political career. Trump's touting of his achievements extended into his professional career as a politician as well, such as stating that "I did more in 47 months as President than Sleepy Joe Biden did in 47 years!",¹⁷¹ where he promoted his presidency as saving the US from destruction. This was done by promoting statements from Lou Dobbs on Fox News and Ronny Jackson that states ""He is arguably the greatest president in our history." Thank you @LouDobbs!",¹⁷² and ""Only because of President Trump, we are going to have a Vaccine by the end of the year." Ronny Jackson, Texas Congressman-Elect".¹⁷³ There is an immense focus by Trump to see himself as a savior of the US against his opponents, whom Trump stated as being detrimental to the safety and the future of the country.

Trump 'the Person' Compared to Trump 'the Persona'

Throughout Trump's personal life and his business and political careers, he has embraced the role of a neoliberal and has adhered to such economic values. Neoliberalism values the maximization of profit, but this focus on corporate wealth can come at the expense of the employees personal or economic safety. Once Trump became president, he launched the US'

¹⁷⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1310587471231582208?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1310587471231582208%7Ctwgr%5E70094bf5ea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁷¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1305002222434963456?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1305002222434963456%7Ctwgr%5E70094bf5ea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁷²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1265779391646187520?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1265779391646187520%7Ctwgr%5E70094bf5ea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

¹⁷³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1326149041248407552?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1326149041248407552%7Ctwgr%5E70094bf5ea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

embracement of neoliberalism into overdrive, as federal regulations in place to protect workers, the environment, and the economy were considered to nothing but unnecessary obstacles (Snider, 2020). One of his first acts as president was signing Executive Order 13311, which stated that for every new regulation that agencies wished to pass, they were required to eliminate “at least” two regulations (Federal Register, 2016; McCaskill & Nussbaum, 2017; as cited in Snider, 2020, p. 87).

Despite Trump’s (the person) personal and political economic philosophy aligning with neoliberalism, Trump the persona embraced much more nationalist, nativist, and protectionist values regarding the economy. He adhered to neoliberalism and the free-market ideology when it was going to directly benefit him but was also nationalistic in that he would limit free-trade with countries that he viewed as enemies or held personal animosity towards. Trump explicitly desired for the US to be the world’s foremost economic superpower, and he would attempt to limit international trade with any country that he felt was a direct threat to the US’ economic dominance, such as placing many tariffs on China, refusing to trade certain materials with Canada, and withdrawing the US from longstanding trade agreements with other countries to create new agreements that would benefit the US. Along with this nationalist trade stance, he would still attempt to infuse such trade values with conventional neoliberalism that would benefit the economic ‘elites’ of society, including attacking unions and workplace regulations, which would be a measure to maximize profit but would come at the expense of the employees.

Trump the person continued to differ from Trump the persona regarding religion as well. The persona that Trump displayed claimed to value religion while the values of Trump the person was in opposition to the same values that he preached to the public as the president. In his personal life, Trump was not religious as his actions were in opposition to what Christianity’s values and even encompassed several of the Seven Deadly Sins, such as lust, greed, wrath, envy, and pride. Despite his personal actions, Trump the persona claimed to be a follower of Christianity and promised that he was going to stand up for “Christian” values, such as supporting bans on abortion, which led to 81% of evangelicals voting for Trump in the 2016 presidential election (Myers, 2019). Trump’s Christian voters and certain church leaders have looked to Trump as being sent by God to “save” the US, which allowed Trump to be viewed as a ‘divine’ figure among his supporters. Trump used religion as a political tactic to tell US citizens that they must follow and support him in order to keep the US safe, otherwise the Democrats were going to ‘destroy’ the US by

supposedly eliminating religion altogether. The use of religion was a rhetorical strategy by Trump to appear relatable to Christian voters, which was exemplified during the Black Lives Matter protests when police used tear gas and forcibly removed peaceful protesters away from St. John's church so that Trump could stand in front of the church with the Bible for a photo-op (Trump ended up holding the Bible upside-down and backwards).

Undermining Democracy: The Social and Political Effect of Trump's Rhetoric

The political approach that Trump took ultimately was to assume as much control as he possibly could, which he tried to do by attacking and undermining democratic institutions in the US. The mentality/outlook that he wanted to express was that of a dominating presence that demanded loyalty of citizens, and those who did not pledge their loyalty were enemies that were out to take him down. He continued his use of discriminatory language to describe the political opposition and citizens, such as people that took part in the Black Lives Matter protests. These sentiments were displayed in his attempts at suppressing the opposition and citizens that did not support him, as well as by attempting to dismantle public and government institutions that did not fit the narrative that he was trying to create. Criticism was viewed as a legitimate threat that was not allowed to stand, and he did everything in his power to force change in his direction in the hope that his values would become the mainstream train of thought.

Defining Opposition as Enmity

Trump's rhetoric promoted the values of an in-group and an out-group, where anybody that did not fit into Trump's ideological orbit was excluded and considered to be an enemy, which included private citizens, the political opposition, the media, and perceived international threats. Trump also focused on specific groups of people as being responsible for the degradation of society outside of politicians, such as migrants, protesters, and low-income individuals.

As mentioned earlier, Trump viewed himself as a leader that was going to save the US from destruction by the Democratic Party. He actively blamed the Democrats for all problems that the US faced, both internally and internationally. He utilized nicknames to demonize and degrade the opposition, such as calling them the "Do Nothing Democrats"¹⁷⁴ and the "Radical Left

¹⁷⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1265633761024188417?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwem%7Ctwterm%5E1265633761024188417%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7C

Democrats”.¹⁷⁵ Through his degrading remarks, he promoted political partisanship by making it appear that the Democrats were completely ineffective at governing and that Trump’s Republican Party was the only party capable of ensuring the survival of the US. Through his claims of incompetence, he likened the Democrats to being a weak party as Trump promoted his strength-based approach to running the country, such as referring to Biden as “Weak, Tired, and Sleepy”.¹⁷⁶ He repeated these claims during the final months of 2020, such as during the Black Lives Matter protests, where Trump continued to exaggerate the amount of violence occurring and claiming that “because of weak and pathetic Democrat leadership, this thuggery is happening in other Democrat run cities and states.”¹⁷⁷ and stating that “Criminals only understand strength!”¹⁷⁸ Trump furthered his attacks on the Democrats by implying that they were a threat to the US as a whole, including from a national security perspective. Trump claimed that Biden would sell out the US to China if he was to become president, but that Trump would protect the country if he was re-elected by putting “America First”.¹⁷⁹

The Democratic Party were not the only political enemies that Trump had, as he considered moderate and non-loyal Republican Party politicians to be a similarly destructive entity as he did the Democrats. Trump attacked them in many of the same ways that he degraded the Democrats,

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¹⁷⁵https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1313624267842560000?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1313624267842560000%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ct
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¹⁷⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1305693861067407365?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1305693861067407365%7Ctwgr%5Eb58d8eb28f25a00abb4056919cb01bbcd26b00a6%7Ct
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¹⁷⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1303292112075661313?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1303292112075661313%7Ctwgr%5Eb58d8eb28f25a00abb4056919cb01bbcd26b00a6%7Ct
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¹⁷⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1301253108404613121?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1301253108404613121%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ct
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¹⁷⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1307091105188589574?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1307091105188589574%7Ctwgr%5E6fe814728df71f77a913d3b88315b91d99ab2d17%7Ct
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such as by labeling them “the weak and ineffective RINO section of the Republican Party”.¹⁸⁰ When Trump mentioned the “RINO section” of the party, he was referring to whom he considered to be “Republican In Name Only”, as he did not consider them to be representative of the GOP and viewed them as counterproductive to what Trump’s Republican Party was trying to accomplish. He implied that they were a burden to the party and wanted them voted out and replaced with Trump-loyalists, exemplified by stating “Never forget, vote them out of office!”¹⁸¹ When several Republicans did not support Trump’s claims of voter fraud, Trump claimed “Who is a worse governor, @BrianKempGA of Georgia or @dougducey of Arizona??? These are two RINO Republicans who fought against me and the Republican Party harder than any Democrat.” (see Footnote 181).

Arguably Trump’s biggest enemy (and whom he benefited from the most) was the media, in which he claimed to be “FAKE NEWS IS THE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE!”¹⁸² When media coverage of Trump was unfavorable to him or those within his orbit, Trump would slander the outlet responsible for publishing the article or state that the information was false and had bad intentions. He would state that the media, in tandem with Twitter and other Big Tech companies, were trying to “SILENCE THE TRUTH”¹⁸³ when his narrative was not at the forefront of the news and not being reported in a positive light.

¹⁸⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1346580318745206785?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1346580318745206785%7Ctwgr%5Eb58d8eb28f25a00abb4056919cb01bbcd26b00a6%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22weak22

¹⁸¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1337749020706549762?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1337749020706549762%7Ctwgr%5Eb58d8eb28f25a00abb4056919cb01bbcd26b00a6%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22weak22

¹⁸²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1290253369404092417?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1290253369404092417%7Ctwgr%5Eb58d8eb28f25a00abb4056919cb01bbcd26b00a6%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22weak22

¹⁸³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1332317394165968899?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1332317394165968899%7Ctwgr%5Eb58d8eb28f25a00abb4056919cb01bbcd26b00a6%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22weak22

Undermining Mainstream Media

Throughout his presidency, Trump engaged in an infamous feud with mainstream media outlets. Trump's rhetoric concerning the media was reactive as he was quick to praise or dismiss any story involving him, depending on if the report painted a positive or negative image of his actions. He targeted specific news outlets that did not praise his every decision and would attempt to discredit those outlets through insults and labeling them as "Fake News". For example, he targeted several critical outlets by stating that "Much more "disinformation" coming out of CNN, MSDNC, @nytimes and @washingtonpost, by far, than coming out of any foreign country, even combined. Fake News is the Enemy of the People!"¹⁸⁴ News outlets like the ones mentioned in Trump's tweet were common antagonistic figures in the orbit of Trump and his supporters. They were widely known to be critical of Trump, unlike Fox News and OANN, which were preferred outlets by Trump due to the positive coverage that he received from those outlets.

Trump's war against the media was considered by him to be a political battle as well. He believed that many outlets were working in tandem with the Democrats, and that these outlets were working to praise the Democrats actions while purposefully harming his reputation. He outwardly implied this sentiment in several tweets regarding the Black Lives Matter protests, such as calling the media "The Far Left Fake News Media",¹⁸⁵ and stating "So pathetic to watch the Fake News Lamestream Media playing down the gravity and depravity of the Radical Left, looters and thugs, ripping up our Liberal Democrat run (only) cities. It is almost like they are all working together?"¹⁸⁶ The undermining of the media by Trump set a dangerous precedent as the presence of a free press is a central aspect of a functioning democracy. The importance of the allowance of a free press allows for fair, unbiased news coverage, and it also allows for the plurality of opinion

¹⁸⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1266799941273350145?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1266799941273350145%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

¹⁸⁵https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1272529858501976065?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1272529858501976065%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

¹⁸⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1268037166946553856?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1268037166946553856%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

that different outlets allow access to. By targeting, undermining, and discrediting specific outlets to serve a political purpose, it serves authoritarian values of control and suppression.

Undermining the System of Checks and Balances

A system of checks and balances is in place in functioning democracies to ensure that one person does not hold absolute power due to the necessary cooperation between the president, congress, and the supreme court. There are three branches of the US government that abide by a system of checks and balances, which are executive, judicial, and legislative. As the president, Trump represents the executive branch and holds more power than any other individual in the US government, such as being able to veto bills passed by congress, therefore the judicial and legislative branches are there to keep him in line if they view his actions as unconstitutional. Trump actively undermined this system through his repeated attacks on congress and the courts. This cast doubt on the legitimacy of congress' and the supreme courts actions, such as by repeatedly insulting and attacking the investigations, first impeachment inquiry into Trump's conduct, and the court's conduct regarding Trump's claims of election fraud.

During Trump's presidency, he had appointed three conservative judges to the federal supreme court, including rushing an appointment and confirmation of one judge before the 2020 election. As the supreme court took on a conservative majority of judges, Trump was rarely challenged on his decisions, but Trump took notice when the majority of the judges did not allow some of his challenges to the 2020 election results to go through. He labeled the supreme court as "totally incompetent and weak on the massive Election Fraud that took place in the 2020 Presidential Election. We have absolute PROOF, but they don't want to see it".¹⁸⁷ Trump had also claimed that "The Supreme Court really let us down. No Wisdom, No Courage!"¹⁸⁸ and that he is "very disappointed in the United States Supreme Court, and so is our great country!"¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1342830505163706369?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1342830505163706369%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

¹⁸⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1337620892139081728?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1337620892139081728%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

¹⁸⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1339770665168228354?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1339770665168228354%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

Trump had also expressed his support for vetoing bills passed by congress if the bills did not contain measures that Trump had personally wanted in the bills. He would thread fear into his statements by claiming that the safety of the US, within the borders and abroad, were at risk if certain bills were passed. He threatened to veto the defense bill several times for various reasons, such as “if the very dangerous & unfair Section 230 is not completely terminated as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), I will be forced to unequivocally VETO the Bill... Take back America NOW”¹⁹⁰ and “if the Elizabeth “Pocahontas” Warren (of all people!) Amendment, which will lead to the renaming (plus other bad things!) of... Military Bases from which we won Two World Wars, is in the Bill!”¹⁹¹ Trump’s attacks on key institutions had repeatedly cast doubt on and undermined the political process in the US in his attempts to abstain himself from any criticism or repercussions for his actions. It showed a deliberate attempt at subverting the rule of law as not being applicable to him. By undermining the efforts and actions made by congress and the supreme court at keeping things in order, Trump implied a desire of exerting total control over how all functions of government should be run.

Undermining Government Institutions and Investigations

Trump’s attacks on government institutions, such as the FBI and the Department of Justice (DOJ), were selective as he would undermine their investigations and activities anytime there was an investigation into Trump’s conduct. Trump was the subject of numerous investigations during his presidency, and he utilized Twitter as a tool to attack specific agencies if it was to his political benefit. As well, Trump would advocate for those same institutions to involve themselves in investigations of others that Trump was opposed to, such as the political opposition and their supporters in an effort to assert his control. He developed and promoted conspiracies to justify these calls, like the conspiracy that the Obama administration was spying on Trump during his

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¹⁹⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1333965375839621120?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1333965375839621120%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

¹⁹¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1278176059876401152?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1278176059876401152%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

transition to and the beginning of his presidency. Trump complained that “We have a totally corrupt previous Administration, including a President and Vice President who spied on my campaign, AND GOT CAUGHT...and nothing happens to them”¹⁹² and that there was “No Republican Senate Judiciary response, NO “JUSTICE”, NO FBI, NO NOTHING... Catch Obama & Biden cold, nothing”.¹⁹³ By developing false narratives, he expressed his support for suppressing the opposition and citizens that he thought of as being a threat to his rule. During the Black Lives Matter protests, he targeted the protesters by claiming that “the FBI & Justice should be investigating the terrorists, anarchists, and agitators of ANTIFA, who run around burning down our Democrat run cities and hurting our people!” (see Footnote 113). This sentiment highlighted his willingness to call on these institutions and agencies to combat his critics and those who pose a challenge to his presidency. Trump’s desire for certain institutions to crack down on the political opposition and their supporters was in stark contrast to how Trump handled investigations into his political actions. Trump’s presidency is infamous for being under multiple investigations for his personal and his administration’s conduct during his presidency and their campaigns. Trump would undermine the credibility of such investigations, which in turn harmed the credibility of the respective institution.

Trump was under investigation for several corrupt actions in attempts to further his political aspirations. He was investigated for making a corrupt phone call to Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy, where he tried to convince Zelenskyy to begin an illegal investigation into Biden in return for military aid for Ukraine. This investigation resulted in Trump’s first impeachment by the House of Representatives. Trump’s attacks on the investigation and the denial of any wrongdoing undermined the confidence of the investigative processes among much of congress and the general public. Trump considered the investigation and impeachment to be a hoax and that his phone call

¹⁹²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1281250565163532288?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1281250566199541761%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es2_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

¹⁹³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1281250566199541761?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1281250566199541761%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

to Zelenskyy was “called “perfect””,¹⁹⁴ while mocking it as a “failed Impeachment”.¹⁹⁵ In the same tweet, he would deflect from his own investigation by stating “I predicted Biden corruption, said to call the A.G., who perhaps knew of the corruption during the impeachment hoax?” (see Footnote 194).

Another crucial investigation that helped shape Trump’s combative nature with these institutions and agencies is the Russia collusion investigation. This investigation was launched by the FBI (titled Crosshair Hurricane) before being taken over by special prosecutor Robert Mueller, who is the former director of the FBI. From the moment that the investigation started, Trump fought back against the allegations, and he took to Twitter to remind people what he thought of the investigation, which was that it was “the illegal Russia Witch Hunt”¹⁹⁶ and “the phony Russia, Russia, Russia HOAX” (see Footnote 195). As Trump continued to claim that “the Greatest Political Crime In the History of the U.S.”¹⁹⁷ was being committed against him, the evidence found in the report contradicted his claims of innocence. Several of Trump’s close allies were convicted and given prison sentences for their role, but Robert Mueller’s final report was not able to find conclusive evidence that Trump himself was involved and obstructed justice, although it did not exonerate him from wrongdoing. Trump claimed that “Mueller should have never been appointed, although he did prove that I must be the most honest man in America!”¹⁹⁸ although he continued his path of undermining the investigation as illegal and corrupt. He continued to attack those

¹⁹⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1337379719872974852?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1337379719872974852%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

¹⁹⁵https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1303860823975178240?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1303860823975178240%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

¹⁹⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1265470573297238016?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1265470573297238016%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

¹⁹⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1266017512162037761?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1266017512162037761%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

¹⁹⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1268496283649609730?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1268496283649609730%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

involved in the investigation, by stating that “James Comey and his band of Dirty Cops”¹⁹⁹ ruined Michael Flynn’s life, supporting Sarah Huckabee-Sanders’ claim of Comey being “a disgraced liar & leaker”,²⁰⁰ and continuing his attacks on Robert Mueller by referring to Mueller and his team as “Robert Mueller and his Angry Democrat Cronies” (see Footnote 199) and that he “won the Mueller Witch Hunt”.²⁰¹ The undermining of this particular investigation highlights Trump’s willingness to politicize and target specific federal institutions and agencies (like the FBI) when it would help him politically. There was no accountability on behalf of Trump and his administration, as there was constant denial of the investigative process and deeming any such investigation as illegal and illegitimate.

His personal and political battles with his own departments and important government agencies harmed the integrity of their investigations and resulted in the immediate questioning of the intentions and results of their work. Agencies that were never intended to be political or partisan in nature were now considered by many to be just that, a tool by the political opposition to destabilize the country by harming those that oppose them. It has harmed the credibility of these institutions among certain members of congress and much of the general population that support the politician being investigated. Trump’s antics of undermining key roles and institutions was detrimental to their reputations that has continued years into Biden’s presidency.

Attacking the Electoral System

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions in place for people in public settings, there was an initiative to get citizens to vote by mail to ensure that there would be less exposure risk at polling stations, but also to ensure that all citizens could still vote in the election if they so desired. Trump fought back against the idea of mail-in voting and launched challenges to ensure

¹⁹⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1275835791701422081?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1275835791701422081%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

²⁰⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1304039852988493824?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1304039852988493824%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

²⁰¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1281236214646034432?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1281236214646034432%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

that people would vote in person, such as claiming that “MAIL-IN VOTING WILL LEAD TO MASSIVE FRAUD AND ABUSE. IT WILL ALSO LEAD TO THE END OF OUR GREAT REPUBLICAN PARTY. WE CAN NEVER LET THIS TRAGEDY BEFALL OUR NATION”.²⁰² He developed and reiterated conspiracy theories that surrounded the election, such as claiming that by allowing mail-in ballots to be used in the presidential election, it would lead to a rigged and illegitimate election. Trump tweeted that “2020 will be the most INACCURATE & FRAUDULENT Election in history”,²⁰³ which was a claim he promoted throughout the entirety of his presidential campaign. As Trump encouraged his supporters to vote in person through his claims of a fraudulent election, the vast majority of mail-in ballots during the election went in the Democratic Party’s favor. Many of the mail-in ballots were counted after the in-person votes had been tallied, therefore showing Trump’s leads in several states disappear as the mail-in ballots were counted.

Mail-in voting provided the opportunity for many citizens to vote who did not feel safe or comfortable voting in person during the pandemic. The election did not go in Trump’s favor and Biden won the election, which for a charismatic leader, cannot be possible without cheating and outside interference. There was no evidence of voter fraud as Trump was claiming, even by his own administration and his attorney general, William Barr. As the election was called and Biden was declared the winner, Trump tweeted that “I WON THIS ELECTION, BY A LOT!”,²⁰⁴ as he doubled down on his conspiracy of a rigged election. This became the (almost) sole focus of Trump during his final two months in office, as he began issuing legal challenges in several states that he thought he should have won and demonstrated the mentality that he was never going to stop these challenges. He stated that “I concede NOTHING! We have a long way to go. This was a RIGGED

²⁰²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1266172570983940101?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Cwterm%5E1266172570983940101%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

²⁰³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1288818160389558273?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Cwterm%5E1288818160389558273%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

²⁰⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1325099845045071873?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Cwterm%5E1325099845045071873%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

ELECTION!”²⁰⁵ while implicating the media and the Dominion voting machines as being corrupt partners of the Democrats in the rigging of the election by claiming “The Radical Left Democrats, working with their partner, the Fake News Media, are trying to STEAL this Election. We won’t let them!”²⁰⁶ and that they used “Radical Left”²⁰⁷ “...owned Dominion Voting Systems”.²⁰⁸ Trump perpetuated these falsehoods until the day of the January 6th Capitol insurrection, which was a direct result of Trump’s lies surrounding the election. Trump demanded that Vice President Mike Pence refuse to certify the results of the election on that day by stating that “All Mike Pence has to do is send them back to the States, AND WE WIN. Do it Mike, this is a time for extreme courage!”²⁰⁹ When Pence refused to obey Trump’s orders, Trump tweeted that:

Mike Pence didn’t have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution, giving States a chance to certify a corrected set of facts, not the fraudulent or inaccurate ones which they were asked to previously certify. USA demands the truth!²¹⁰

²⁰⁵https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1327979630477922304?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1327979630477922304%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

²⁰⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1328361451497664512?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1328361451497664512%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

²⁰⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1328152465016020993?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1328152465016020993%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

²⁰⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1328152466752491526?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1328152466752491526%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

²⁰⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1346808075626426371?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1346808075626426371%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

²¹⁰ This tweet was posted by Trump on January 6th, 2021, at 2:24:22 PM EST. It was later deleted from Trump’s Twitter profile but is still visible on the Trump Twitter Archive v2 website at:

<https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222020-05-24%22%2C%222023-11-09%22%5D&retweet=%22false%22&searchbox=%22Mike+Pence+didn%E2%80%99t+have+the+courage+to+do+what+should+have+been+done+to+protect+our+Country+and+our+Constitution%2C+giving+States+a+chance+to+certify+a+corrected+set+of+facts%2C+not+the+fraudulent+or+inaccurate+ones+which+they+were+asked+to+previously+certify.+USA+demand+the+truth%21%22>

The undermining of the election resulted in the deadly insurrection on the Capitol building, where congress was certifying the election results to confirm Biden as the President-elect and Kamala Harris as the Vice President-elect. Trump’s supporters stormed the Capitol building to stop the certification of the election results based on the conspiracy theories that were pushed by Trump on a daily basis. Trump utilized the fear in his devoted supporter base that they were being targeted and attacked by a corrupt system which was determined to remove Trump from office. Trump played upon the sentiments of his supporters to make it feel as if it was a personal attack on them and their values, and that he was standing with them in solidarity against supposed corruption by stating that “We hear you (and love you) from the Oval Office. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!”,²¹¹ and referring to the “the thousands of people pouring into D.C. They won’t stand for a landslide election victory to be stolen”²¹² the day before the insurrection.

Using Hateful and Discriminatory Speech

Trump’s presidency is infamous for his use of hateful and discriminatory language to describe his enemies, perceived enemies of the US, and those that dared to go against his presidential initiatives, regardless of if the individual was an ally or not. The use of hateful language against the political opposition appeared to be a near daily occurrence during Trump’s presidential campaigns and his presidency. He developed demeaning and/or derogatory nicknames for his opponents, such as the “Radical Left Democrat Party”,²¹³ and for individual politicians like

²¹¹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1346578706437963777?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Cwterm%5E1346578706437963777%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

²¹²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1346580318745206785?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Cwterm%5E1346580318745206785%7Ctwgr%5E3b82e741486ad26dd024ce3e4587924af778d7fe%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-24222C222023-11-09225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22election22

²¹³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1266326065833824257?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Cwterm%5E1266326065833824257%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

“Sleepy Joe Biden”,²¹⁴ “Crooked Hillary Clinton”,²¹⁵ “Crazy Bernie Sanders”,²¹⁶ and “Elizabeth “Pocahontas” Warren”.²¹⁷ These tactics were utilized as a means of insulting his opponents personal characteristics to make citizens question whether they were suitable candidates and to harm the credibility of the Democratic Party as the election approached. Similarly, he insulted any Republican politician that did not support him or show him loyalty as being a “so-called Republican”,²¹⁸ and that they cannot be trusted like Trump loyalist Republicans. Trump used exaggeration to describe the professional characteristics of his opponents, but also attacked and insulted their personal characteristics as well. This dehumanizing language of the opposition was used in a disqualifying fashion to create an image of incompetent politicians who are incapable of governing the country. These insults were not exclusive to the political opposition, as Trump used hateful language to describe the supporters of the Democratic Party, and individuals that actively opposed him or Trump expressed disdain for. Trump’s use of hateful and discriminatory language was also a tactic to fuel racism and stoke fear within his supporters. Trump’s focus on the Black Lives Matter protests was a prominent example of Trump promoting white-nationalist rhetoric by appealing to his majority-white voter base. He described Black Lives Matter protesters as “killers,

²¹⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1264177305771036672?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1264177305771036672%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

²¹⁵https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1270071794628726784?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1270071794628726784%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

²¹⁶https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1289275311272521728?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1289275311272521728%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

²¹⁷https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1271145584791965696?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1271145584791965696%7Ctwgr%5E0a96862d9c6a0b526b07ddd8612b417f9ee0dff%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-20222C222023-09-18225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22salary22

²¹⁸https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1326525851752656898?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1326525851752656898%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

terrorists, arsonists, anarchists, thugs, hoodlums, looters, ANTIFA & others”²¹⁹ that “burn and pillage our cities, and they think it is just wonderful, even the death”.²²⁰

Trump as a Charismatic Leader Promoting a Neo-Fascist Agenda through Populism

Trump’s charismatic leadership was utilized in tandem with populism, which allowed him to create and promote a neo-fascist agenda. As he presented his vision to his followers, he attacked his opponents and claimed that he was the only person who could lead the US in a prosperous direction. As right-wing populists and demagogues do, they appeal to citizens fears and prejudices without forming a rational argument. Trump did these through the formation of a bond with his followers and presenting himself as an individual that could ‘save’ the US and solve all their problems with simple solutions, which is by opposing the Democratic Party. The vision that he presented was hateful and discriminatory in nature, as he promoted the US as a white, nationalist, Christian nation and wanted it to remain that way. He targeted migrants as stealing jobs and increasing crime, while the Democrats and the ‘establishment’ were systematically suppressing citizens. This resulted in anti-democratic rhetoric that advocated for the suppression of people and institutions that Trump deemed dangerous. His followers believed in this hard-lined approach for promoting far-right values as they were promised that their quality of life would improve.

Trump’s Populist Appeal to Republican Voters

The connection between populism and charisma in previous studies have been limited but the two concepts are often linked together, such as through charisma being at the center of Weyland’s (1999) definition of populism, which he views as “a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power.”²²¹ (as cited in Pappas, 2016, p. 378).

²¹⁹https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1268166288993632256?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1268166288993632256%7Ctwgr%5E0a96862d9c6a0b526b07ddd8612b417f9ee0dff%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-09-18225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22salary22

²²⁰https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1271446019281215488?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1271446019281215488%7Ctwgr%5E70094bfeea5bc3dcc277ecf05a7ea6e8beeee425%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-23222C222023-11-08225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22greatestpresident22

²²¹ Kurt Weyland, “Neoliberal Populism in Latin America and Eastern Europe,” *Comparative Politics* 31 (1999): 381; Weyland, “Clarifying a Contested Concept,” 14.; as cited in Pappas, 2016, p. 378.

Similarly, Hawkins (2003: 140) defines the concept of populism as being a “charismatic mode of linkages combined with a democratic discourse that emphasises the embodiment of a popular will” (as cited in McDonnell, 2017, p. 27), while Zaslove (2008) includes charismatic leadership in his definition of populism by stating that the leader claims to have a direct and unmediated relationship with citizens, as they claim to be one of them and to speak for them (as cited in McDonnell, 2017, p. 27). When right-wing populist parties are able to gain electoral success, having highly charismatic leaders are important to these victories (e.g. Eatwell, 2003; Taggart, 2000; as cited in van der Brug & Mughan, 2007, p. 43).

Many scholars have had difficulties associating charisma with populism due to the focus primarily being on how the leaders present themselves instead of on how they are perceived by followers, although McDonnell argues to the contrary. McDonnell notes that several scholars, including Max Weber (1978), argue that charismatic authority depends upon how the leader is perceived by their “followers” or “disciples”, thus the logic that the two concepts are not connected runs contrary to classic charismatic literature (as cited in McDonnell, 2017, p. 27-28). Kenny (2009) provides a related definition as they state that populism is “the charismatic mobilization of a mass movement in pursuit of political power” (as cited in Kenny, 2020, p. 262), thus populist political parties are led by charismatic leaders who obtain and hold their power by mobilizing followers that are typically free of other political affiliations (Kenny, 2020). Daniela di Piramo showcases their argument on the subject by stating:

The charismatic populist leader fascinates, mystifies and excites. Populist leaders etch their mark deeply and indelibly on the canvas of national and global history; often colourful and flamboyant, they are successful at forging a bond with their followers that rarely fails to include moral or religious overtones. Populist leaders affirm to be speaking for and with the people; beyond mere representation, they claim to personify the people and to be prepared to faithfully follow something relatively similar to what Rousseau referred to as the “general will”. In the midst of this tumultuous identification and bonding process, institutional boundaries and conventions are often disregarded, if not derided, in favour of unmediated contact with their citizens (as cited in Păuș & Ștefănel, 2017, p. 87-88).

Populism was a central characteristic of Trump’s charismatic leadership style as he pegged himself as a political outsider that citizens could relate to instead of the ‘establishment’ or the ‘elites’. He utilized the fear and anger residing within much of the population as they had felt that they were

being left behind. It was through this method of framing that he was able to appeal to ordinary people, as he attempted to appear that he was one of them under the pretense that he was their voice. He promoted his 'vision' for how to 'save' the US from an 'ungodly' political opposition and acted as a beacon for his supporters to follow. He mobilized his followers in such a way that they viewed Trump as the sole leader that was worth following. These supporters had freed themselves from all other affiliations as they identified with the promises that Trump had made, which was to lead to his ultimate goal to "Make America Great Again."

As charismatic leadership depends on the faithful devotion of followers, without whom the leader would be an ordinary citizen with no authority, Trump's populist appeal to voters could only succeed with devoted supporters. He presented himself as a 'strongman' with a set of goals that he claimed needed to be accomplished to fulfill his mission. By acting like a dominating presence in US politics, he created a collective identity among his supporters. This allowed his followers to justify their actions to achieve Trump's goals, such as supporting Trump's scapegoating tactics, as they targeted those who opposed Trump in order to achieve stepping-stones that would lead to achieving their overarching goal. Trump maintained the faith of his followers throughout his presidency, and many have continued to support him to this day. He continued to claim that he is fighting for ordinary citizens that have supposedly been wronged by the political elites and the opposition.

Trump's Demagoguery and Claims of Mastery

Trump's rhetorical style incorporated right-wing authoritarianism and populism, which resulted in a neo-fascist rhetorical style. His rhetoric was formed through the utilization of many different talking points that played upon the fears of many US citizens. As he appealed to right-wing voters across the country and played upon their fears, his followers continued to rally around his message and his 'mission': Make America Great Again. Trump's rhetoric and leadership utilized demagogic tactics to appeal to the prejudices and wants of his followers instead of using rational arguments. By playing upon existing (or by creating) thoughts and desires of certain citizens, he appealed directly to those who felt as if they have been let down or disregarded in various settings, whether it was politically, ethnically, or occupationally. Demagogy (as exhibited by Trump) was used in tandem with Bligh et al.'s (2004) dimensions of charismatic rhetoric to appeal to right-wing voters with the development of a collective focus, temporal orientation,

follower worth, similarity to followers, values and moral justifications, tangibility, action, and adversity.

Trump's rhetoric built a sense of *collective focus* among Republican voters and the far-right by referring to all his supporters as being victims of the political 'establishment' and 'elites', thus telling them that they must work in unison to achieve the 'goals' that are a part of the collective 'mission'. To achieve his goals, Trump's *temporal orientation* promoted the narrative that the US was on a steep decline due to policies that have been enacted by Barack Obama, Joe Biden, and the rest of the Democratic Party. As he claimed that the US was set for certain destruction if the Democrats won the 2016 and 2020 elections, he offered a vision for the future for his supporters by making repeated promises that a Trump presidency was going to save the US by creating jobs, fighting 'political correctness', and 'securing' the US' borders. Trump would praise his *follower's worth* for standing up for his 'America First' and 'Make America Great Again' initiatives, and that they must continue to show their support (either online or in person) of various conservative causes that Trump campaigns for to ensure that conservative politicians get on board with Trump's plans. Through the sense of community and collectivity that Trump built between his followers, there was little attention focused on Trump's status as a reality TV star and billionaire businessperson. He created a perception that he was *similar to his followers* as he was a political outsider, thus meaning that he claimed to speak for ordinary citizens. He also repeatedly praised his followers for their support of him and their attacks on the political opposition. By instilling the *values and moral justification* that he wanted his supporters to follow and by supporting their actions (hostile or not), it supported the use of such tactics in his followers to aid Trump in completing his 'mission'. For example: such justification was a rhetorical tool that led his supporters to believe that they could and should storm the Capitol building to stop the certification of the 2020 election results.

Trump's 'mission' to 'Make America Great Again' was the vision that he rallied his supporters behind, but he never had concrete plans to offer his supporters on how to achieve his mission as he referenced *intangible* goals. New goals were repeatedly added as Trump found more obstacles that stood between him and his quest for obtaining as much power as he possibly could. Trump wanted to create a far-right political dystopia where those that followed him would prosper, and he would inspire his followers to strive for every new goal that he placed in front of them by using grandiose language to describe the future that he and his followers wanted to see. By

inspiring his followers to believe that his desired future is obtainable, Trump actively motivated his followers to support and vote Trump-loyalist Republicans to office across the US, along with using verbal and physical threats/violent tactics to achieve his vision. Trump would regularly offer reassurance to his supporters by telling them what must be done to fulfill his ‘mission’ and how important the goals were to realizing his vision for the country, which inspired confidence in them that it could be achieved through *action*. Trump desperately tried to convey the message to his supporters that the US was under attack and was faced with *adversity* and certain destruction by the political ‘establishment’ and ‘elites’, especially by the Democrats and moderate Republicans that were not loyal to him. Trump told his followers that they were being taken advantage of by the US government and other countries but claimed that they will all be saved and prosper as long as he was president. His exaggerations were part of his tactics to create his vision for the future of the US by claiming that his version of the US would be superior to the existing reality.

Trump’s leadership style allowed him to assume the role of the charismatic hero to his supporters. Even after the events of January 6th, 2021, Trump continued to maintain a viciously loyal following that continue to interpret Trump’s words as gospel. Trump would promote himself as the charismatic master that all should follow and aspire to, as he tweeted “Barack Obama was toppled from the top spot and President Trump claimed the title of the year’s Most Admired Man. Trump number one, Obama number two, and Joe Biden a very distant number three...”²²² in reference to a past and future president of the US. He would also attempt to prove his mission as the charismatic leader to his followers by claiming that he was fighting for them, to prove that he was worthy of their support and that they would fare well with him as leader, evidenced by him tweeting “I’m not fighting for me, I’m fighting for the 74,000,000 million people (not including the many Trump ballots that were “tossed”), a record for a sitting President, who voted for me!”²²³ when he fought to overturn the 2020 presidential election results, as the narrative was created that it cannot be possible for Biden to have beaten the God-willed leader (Trump) in the election.

²²²https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1344259405274087424?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1344259405274087424%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

²²³https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1333405854297632770?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1333405854297632770%7Ctwgr%5Efd8a44a1c845b639e71d31c7099595a4469ec1%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-2022C222023-11-10225Dsearchbox%3D22Thesearethethingsandeventsthathappen22

Trump's attempt at achieving his 'mission' as the charismatic leader depended upon his ability to connect with and inspire his followers, along with trying to reach out to non-supporters and draw them in by telling them that he was the only person capable of saving the country from the 'ungodly' Democratic party. Trump utilized his rhetoric to communicate his vision, primarily through his personal Twitter account. He touted a collective focus to his followers and told them that they have much more worth than anybody else. He presented the idea to his supporters that they were the ones being oppressed and targeted by the political establishment and the elites, and their actions are justifiable to achieve Trump's 'mission'. Trump brought his followers together by creating goals and a shared identity that would create a personal connection to his 'mission'. These claims of fighting for his supporters at his personal expense highlights how he promoted himself to his followers as a self-sacrificing leader. He motivated his supporters by implying that he was putting himself in harm's way to provide better lives for them, such as by supposedly standing up to the political 'establishment' and 'elites'. Trump further promoted this behavior through his claims of not accepting the President's salary, where he stated: "I promised YOU I would not take a dime of salary as your President. I donate the entire \$400,000!"²²⁴ These sorts of actions are able to build trust between the leader and their followers, as telling his supporters that he is fighting for them, along with an unwillingness to accept (or to delay) rewards and benefits are perceived as actions taken by a leader that will do whatever it takes to improve the lives of their supporters.

Trump's Charismatic and Populist Rhetoric

Trump's presidency can be attributed with many different labels as it was unlike any other presidency in US history, and it has had worldwide consequences. World leaders of similar qualities have gained power throughout the world since Trump's presidential victory in 2016, and although he is no longer president, he continues maintain his loyal following while maintaining his stranglehold on the Republican Party. He rallied a movement based on the prospect of fear and that there was a guaranteed, imminent threat about to occur if Trump was not there to grab the reigns and steer the course.

²²⁴https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1294397381073678339?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwetwembed%7Ctwterm%5E1294397381073678339%7Ctwgr%5E0a96862d9c6a0b526b07ddd8612b417f9ee0dff%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fdates%3D5B222020-05-20222C222023-09-18225Dresults%3D1searchbox%3D22salary22

The election of Donald Trump can find its roots grounded in neo-liberal orthodoxy, religious fundamentalism, educational repression, and an acceleration toward militarism in the US (Giroux, 2017, p. 889). The moment that Trump appeared on the political scene; he embraced the role of a charismatic leader through the use of populism. He appeared at a time when many US citizens thought that the country was in the midst of a crisis that needed a bold, new personality to lead them out of it. Trump seized this opportunity and proceeded to rally supporters behind his message of moral superiority over the opposition. He embodied the personality of a savior to many US citizens, and by being a political outsider, he was considered to be a relatable candidate that was speaking for the everyday citizen. He immediately delved into an us vs. them rhetoric, where he was thought to be all knowing with all the answers, while anybody who opposed him or dissented from his ranks were the enemies that must be defeated. Trump expressed a hatred for Muslims, Mexicans, women, journalists, dissidents, and anybody that exhibited qualities that he viewed as being “unamerican” (Giroux, 2018, p. 51). As a proponent of populist rhetoric, the leader develops an image of a ‘morally pure people’, which Trump attributed to his followers and described anybody that opposed him or fit his idea of being “unamerican” as an enemy.

Trump’s leadership style centered around presenting a vision for the future of the US, specifically created to appeal to conservative and far-right voters. He promoted the idea that he was placing himself in the line of fire against a corrupt elite/establishment, and that they were stopping him from achieving the collective goals for the country, as he stated that “Never forget, they are coming after ME, because I am fighting for YOU!”²²⁵ Trump’s use of charismatic leadership also placed an emphasis on creating a collective identity. The use of ‘I’ was utilized by Trump to take credit for accomplishments or initiatives taken by his administration, but the use of ‘we’ and ‘us’ was common in his tweets to relate himself to his supporters and create his vision of the country for his supporters. He rallied the values of an ‘us’ and ‘we’ to develop the us vs. them rhetoric that was prevalent throughout his presidency. This collective identity was created to develop a narrative of a ‘proper American’, as Trump used nativist and ultra-nationalist language to describe people classified as ‘others’ by his rhetoric. The core aspect of populist rhetoric that

²²⁵https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1306800269578051585?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etwembed%7Cwterm%5E1306800269578051585%7Ctwgr%5E50670da06fd1657309e799e2a853ae1f82318b6b%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetrumparchive.com%2F%3Fresults%3D1dates%3D5B222020-05-21222C222023-11-06225Dretweet%3D22false22searchbox%3D22fightingforyou22

Trump capitalized on was through claiming that his supporters and ordinary citizens were being taken advantage of by the 'elites' of society and by people that didn't fit Trump's definition of a 'proper American'. He promised simple solutions that could supposedly be solved by fighting back against the people that he viewed as enemies and by claiming to be their voice, therefore implying that he was doing everything on their behalf.

Through the utilization of charismatic leadership and rhetoric, Trump's presidential campaigns and his presidency incorporated a vast variety of, but interconnected, characteristics. He prominently scapegoated the political opposition and anybody belonging to certain groups that he opposed, such as racial, religious, and cultural minorities. By labeling certain individuals or groups as 'others' to separate them from Trump's perception of the 'us', it promoted a nativist and ultra-nationalist rhetorical style that resulted from a continued desirability for inequality and privilege. He would also blame the political opposition for all problems that the US faced as a method of escaping any accountability. He would claim that the US and its citizens were failed by the political elites who have decimated the country's economy, and that they and the 'corrupt' political establishment were to blame for people's poor economic conditions. He worked tirelessly to conform public and institutional opinion, as he shaped government departments to suit his personal agenda and promoted conspiracies to slander people that he considered to be his enemy. His tactics of blaming the opposition for every problem that the US was facing allowed him to deny any wrongdoing.

Trump's charisma also offered the prospect of rewards by voting him to the presidency and by keeping him in office past the 2020 election. He proposed the idea that all citizens would reap the rewards of a prosperous country with him as the president, no matter their affiliation, which would never occur should the Democrats assume power. He advocated that success for the US is supposedly guaranteed if people agreed to follow him and pledge their loyalty, as he claimed that success would only occur if the entirety of the group fell in line. This collective identity also caused Trump to be viewed by his followers as being able to speak for their interests, as Trump attempted to blur the lines between ordinary citizens and his billionaire status by claiming that he is fighting for them. These views continued to foster in his followers and led to policy initiatives that were directed to attack and demonize people that he felt were a threat. Trump found the support for these initiatives from his supporters by developing the narrative of what he considered to be a 'proper American' (white, Christian, born in the US) or 'unamerican' (non-white, non-Christian, having

migrated to the US from a different country). The use of interpellation²²⁶ was crucial for Trump in this instance through the identity that he had forged between his supporters, demonstrating that he was able to interpolate his followers into believing that they have a built a connection with Trump. The economic conditions and the emphasis that is placed onto various areas of society (such as education or religion) shape the lives of citizens and causes them to accept where they are socio-economically, but they believe otherwise. Trump wanted citizens to accept the idea that they free by association, but the interests of the rich and powerful (such as Trump, who is a billionaire, reality tv personality businessperson) were actually in control, and Trump's policies were not being implemented in their best interests like they believe.

Taking all of the factors into consideration through the examination of Trump's tweets, Trump's rhetorical style does constitute a neo-fascist rhetoric. Trump's rhetorical style of utilizing authoritarian and populist tactics have worked to create an anti-democratic atmosphere in the US. Trump's rhetoric undermined democratic institutions by using democracy itself, as he was able to attack the democratic process from within once he was elected to the presidency. He advocated for the violent suppression of protests advocating for racial equality and an end to systemic discrimination and police brutality. He developed and promoted various conspiracy theories that undermined the severity of certain problems (such as the Covid-19 virus) or promoted certain initiatives (like mail-in voting) as being a detrimental action to the country. These conspiracies were developed and promoted with no evidence, and even when they were debunked by various leading authorities, Trump continued his promotion of the conspiracies because they suited his political agenda. His constant attacks on those he opposed created a volatile political climate. He fought for total control of the country, and those that disagreed or opposed him were considered his opponents that must be defeated. Trump's neo-fascist rhetoric also acted as a dog whistle to the far-right, such as white supremacists and other members that hold prejudiced views. He allowed for members of the far-right to express and act upon their sentiments without fear of repercussion, and they felt that they were justified in doing so as the President was using far-right talking points

²²⁶ Althusser (1971, 182) states that: "Interpellation is the process of a subject being caught up in an "imaginary" relation to other people and to the social whole. This relation is imaginary because it is the stage on which a subject assumes an illusory freedom; in fact, its actions are determined by the ISAs" (as cited in Birdwell, 2017, p. 315). ISAs (ideological State apparatuses) are the "the bourgeois institutions, notably family, education, and religion" that result in a person submitting to the rules that are set by the established order and accept their socio-economic position (Althusser, 1971, 132; as cited in Birdwell, 2017, p. 315).

and values to govern the country. An identity was formed between them and Trump as there was a President in office that they felt was working in their interests.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter demonstrated Trump's political rhetoric through the examination of his tweets on his Twitter account from May 25th, 2020, until his account was suspended on January 8th, 2021. Trump's charismatic leadership and rhetoric, as showcased through his tweets, allowed him to mobilize his supporters by promising a romanticized version of a time long past. Trump's incorporation of authoritarian and populist values developed an anti-democratic presidency, as his political position stemmed from 'othering' his enemies and encouraging the suppression of specific individuals. Through his utilization of anti-democratic and suppressive tactics, his presidency does constitute a neo-fascist rhetoric, as he undermined and attacked democratic institutions from within government once he was elected. He used this power as an attempt to obtain complete control over the US and its major functions, even at the expense of certain groups, individuals, civilian participation, and the promise of all people being treated equally under the rules of democracy. The existing literature has characterized Trump as a far-right politician that advocated for a white, ultra-nationalist version of the US that he promoted by appealing to citizens through the use of fear. As a charismatic leader that used charismatic rhetorical strategies, he communicated a particular worldview that can be described as authoritarian, populist, and neo-fascist, which he is qualified as based on the information from the literature.

Conclusion

This research examined how Trump's use of charismatic leadership and charismatic rhetoric influenced how he interacted with his followers over his Twitter account, which was his primary communicative tool during his presidency. I argued that through Trump's charisma, he promoted a worldview of strict loyalty (which he considered to be 'patriotism') and anybody that opposed him was labeled as an enemy that must be defeated. He entered politics as somebody that spoke directly to the fears of conservative citizens and offered simple solutions to their problems. He utilized charisma and populism to brandish an image of somebody that was speaking for ordinary citizens, despite the differences (billionaire vs. working class) that existed. As this faux connection between Trump and his followers grew, Trump developed a faithful following that persisted throughout his presidency and still holds strong to this day. His followers were considered to be 'real Americans' while he 'othered' all other people, furthering the divide between political parties and ideologies in the US. People that did not fit into his mold were targeted and excluded, promoting a white, Christian, ultra-nationalist nation that he strived to create.

Trump's presidency ended in infamy, as he is the only US president to be impeached twice and he incited an insurrection to stop the democratic certification of the 2020 presidential election results. Trump's presidency exhibited pure turmoil for the entirety of his tenure in office, and as he vies for the presidency once again, he has continued to double down on the volatile claims he made during his term as president. He claims that in the 'mythical' past that exemplifies the 'Make America Great Again' values that he wants to reinstate, people who were critical of him would be out to "DEATH" (which was directed at the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that served in his administration), the mainstream media would be charged with "COUNTRY THREATENING TREASON", and that rough justice would be dished out if he returns to power (Lehmann, 2023; Marcus, 2023; as cited in Smith, 2023, p. 23-24).

This research contributes to the study of Trump's political leadership and rhetoric, and it provides an increased understanding of how Trump incorporated charisma into his political styles. He utilized charisma to take on the perception of a God-like figure to his followers and was able to be a distant charismatic leader through the use of his Twitter account. This provided him with the opportunity to communicate with the public at any time that he desired, and it was impossible for his messages to be edited, censored, or not seen in their entirety. This brand of politics and political outreach was considered new and allowed for easy communication to be received by

Trump's followers from Trump himself. His influence over social media was a constant reminder for his followers that there was a 'mission' to strive for as they believed Trump's words of the US being in turmoil because of the political opposition. This research also shows how his leadership and rhetorical styles resulted in authoritarian, populist, and neo-fascist rhetoric, which acted as a dog whistle to conservatives and the far-right that felt that they were being left behind and were searching for a leader to guide them. This resulted in sweeping white nationalist policy initiatives and actions that his followers supported, and they continued to follow him as he was a political leader working towards what they wanted. Trump's followers perceived him as taking on a 'corrupt establishment' and that he was fighting directly for them.

At the theoretical level, this research highlights how the concept of charisma is typically associated with 'positively' held values, such as being a self-sacrificing leader and claiming to fight for the betterment of their supporters at their own personal expense. As a result, Trump can be thought of not as charismatic, but as a 'strongman' or a 'big man' as his leadership was strictly concerned with strict control and self-profiteering. Therefore, the concept of charisma allows us to demonstrate that on one hand, an individual's values are not important for them to be considered charismatic. On the other hand, Trump is regarded as being charismatic by a large percentage of the US population because they perceive him as 'liberating' them from 'political correctness' due to his persona being raw and hostile in his messaging, and from openly and proudly championing values that are not politically strategic to espouse.

This research contributes to the literature on Trump as it describes the distinction between Trump the person and Trump the persona. This research highlights how Trump created his persona of claiming that he was a president for all and that he cared for all citizens, despite his personal messages and actions demonstrating the opposite. This distinction contributes to the understanding of the disconnect that exists between the person and the persona. In his personal messages and when he was speaking to the others (interviews, press conferences, campaign rallies, etc.), Trump openly promoted and displayed hateful and bigoted messages, and would often speak in a rambling fashion that was incoherent in nature. Through the use of his Twitter account, the persona was much more structured in its arguments as he had time to craft the tweets in such a way or would have aids help him in creating and editing the tweets. This distinction is an important contribution to the literature as it demonstrates how Trump desired to be portrayed by society compared to his

personal messages and actions, highlighting how he utilized charisma to promote far-right values while attempting to characterize himself as a leader that is fighting for other's interests.

It would have been interesting to delve deeper into how Trump's leadership showcased itself at different times through his presidency, along with researching the social media outreach of Trump from his Truth Social account to acquire further data. This could have provided insight into Trump's responses to other significant events that occurred during his presidency, as well as how he is currently utilizing social media as a means of communication now that he no longer uses Twitter and has set up his own social media platform to communicate with followers and conservatives. Due to the scope of this research and the difficulty with coding a wide range of dates and social media posts, this research was limited to his Twitter account during the final months of his presidency regarding two important events. Finally, it would be interesting in future research to look at Trump's charisma and rhetoric as it evolves over time, as well as during (and after) the 2024 presidential election due to Trump being the frontrunner for the Republican Party presidential nominee once again at the time of this thesis. Future research in these areas may provide important insight into the development and uses of political ideologies in the future, especially at a time when political divisions are widening and there are many politicians and citizens advocating for a regression in human rights. This information is crucial as society must continue to oppose bigotry in all of its forms in the continuous fight for acceptance and inclusivity for all.

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